Interview with Philip R. Mayhew

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

PHILIP R. MAYHEW

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: May 26, 1995

Q: I wonder if you could tell me a little bit about your background: when, where you were born and something about your family.

MAYHEW: I was born in the Presidio, which is a military base in San Francisco. I lived there for the first few years of my life. Then, at a rather young age, went to the Philippines for 3 or 4 years. I think we came back about 1940. Then I grew up in Spokane, Washington and various other locations with military bases, ending in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, from which I went to college at Princeton. After Princeton I was a trainee in a Wall Street bank for a year, then in the military service, and then went to work after that for the Washington Post.

Q: I'd like to go back for a minute. Was your father in the regular army?

MAYHEW: Yes.

Q: What was his specialty?

MAYHEW: He was an ordnance man. He was Canadian, actually, and left home after high school, not wanting to stay on the farm in Quebec. Eventually he ended up in the western United States, then joined the American army.

Q: Were you tempted to join the army at all, as a career?

MAYHEW: No, not really. I never had a great interest in that.

Q: You went to Princeton, you graduated from there in 1956.

MAYHEW: That's right.

Q: What was your major?

MAYHEW: English, graduated with the highest honors.

Q: Did that tempt you to get into writing, or anything like that?

MAYHEW: Well I really did not want to be an academic. My parents had both died: one when I was 14, and one when I was 16. So after graduating I thought I ought to get a job somewhere. A businessman seemed to be the most likely thing, so I went to work as an investment trainee for First National Trust Company, which is now part of Citicorp.

Q: But then you ended up in the Marine Corps for a while, didn't you?

MAYHEW: Spent a couple of years in the Marine Corps as an alternative to being drafted. Then not wanting, particularly, to go back to the banking business—which I found was awfully dull—I went to work as a copy boy for the Washington Post. I think the salary was about $50 a week. Then I became a staff reporter, doing all the things that young reporters do: obituaries, police, rewrites, and some features. But I wanted to go overseas. At that time the Washington Post had not expanded overseas the way it subsequently did. So I decided that I would try for the Foreign Service.

Q: How had you hear about the Foreign Service?

MAYHEW: Well, I don't really recall now but it must have been in the atmosphere of Washington.

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam?

MAYHEW: Yes.

Q: That was in 1961?

MAYHEW: I came in March '61. The exam was probably in 1960.

Q: So you were right in the first wave through the Kennedy era.

MAYHEW: That's right.

Q: Did you in your class, when you were getting trained, did you get any feel for the enthusiasm about Kennedy, and all that?

MAYHEW: I don't think so much it was the enthusiasm that was focused on Kennedy. I think there certainly was an enthusiasm about being able to do things in the world; to meet challenges abroad; fight communism and all of that. A great deal of which must have come from thoughts of Kennedy, speeches of Kennedy. I think certainly the leadership factor was there. We liked to think we had nearly all the answers in the early 60s.

Q: What was your training like?

MAYHEW: Well, as I remember after some 30-some years, it was not particularly useful. Perhaps the most useful part of it was those parts which made one realize that other people thought in different ways; and had different habits; came from different cultures

and were going to approach problems differently. This is elementary, but often forgotten, particularly by people in the Department.

A lot of it seemed to be focused on finding out how to read the visa manual. Which, I think for most of us, was minimally useful since we had only one assignment doing consular work and probably never did it again.

Q: Your first post was where?

MAYHEW: In Laos.

Q: Laos was in center stage, although a very small country, at that particular time, wasn't it?

MAYHEW: Yes, it was. Personally, I wanted to go to a French-speaking post and had an interest in Asia but almost none in Africa, the obvious alternative. When I got to Laos, it was beginning, I think, to be a real focus of attention. President Kennedy in 1960 had sent U.S. troops to northeast Thailand as a warning for Laos.

Q: What was the political situation in Laos when you got there in '61?

MAYHEW: Confused. In 1960, neutralist military leader Kong Le had taken Vientiane from rightist General Phoumi Nosavan. In 1961, by the time I got there, the political situation was somewhat peculiar. Phoumi had retaken the capital, and we were supporting him, but there was a neutralist faction, and a communist faction. Each had foreign supporters.

When I got there, wives and other dependents, who had been evacuated in 1960, still had not returned, so we were bunked together in various houses. It was sort of like being back in college again, in a sense. For cost, and security reasons, people were sharing houses.

Q: What type of work did you have?

MAYHEW: I started out as a junior officer doing the consular work, which was minimal. A little bit of economic kinds of things. Sort of trying to scare-up something to do because being a vice consul in Laos was not a very demanding job.

Q: What about getting around there? Were you pretty well confined to Vientiane?

MAYHEW: You were largely confined to Vientiane and its immediate surroundings. You could fly to Savannakhet or to Pakse. The roads, quite apart from the security problem, were pretty awful. The air transport was not much, so you were pretty well restricted to Vientiane. Though later I was one of the first diplomatic travelers, with my boss Bill Thomas, to go up to the famous Plain of Jars, so-called because of neolithic burial jars on the plain. He had wrangled an invitation from Phoumi Vongvichit, who was one of the communist faction figures. We spent a day in the Plain of Jars. I did get to Luang Prabang, because I went up as Ambassador Unger's staff aide for his credential presentation to the Lao king. But travel was very difficult.

Q: You served under two ambassadors while you were there? Went through Brown and Unger?

MAYHEW: That's right.

Q: What was your impression? I mean, here you were a junior officer, of how these two men operated.

MAYHEW: One thing that needs to be outlined, I think, is the setting. We were carrying on some of the functions of a normal embassy in a very abnormal kind of place. The Embassy really was a special purpose post, trying to maintain a modicum of stability in Laos and avoid a communist takeover for the larger stakes of Thailand and Vietnam. This meant trying to fuse a coalition government out of the three political factions—communist, rightist and neutralist. It also involved supporting a large CIA effort of the so-called Secret War in Laos. There was an enormous CIA establishment across the river in Udorn, Thailand

working for US ends in Laos. In many ways those of us in the embassy were merely ancillary to this huge project.

So to get back to the two ambassadors. The most important thing that Winthrop Brown and Washington special envoys were trying to do was to pull together the three factions of Laos into a unified government. They finally did get agreement from all three factions very close to Winthrop Brown's date of departure. I can remember him getting the news at some sort of embassy function where we all were; that the government had finally been formed. He departed and could count himself, I guess, as having completed his mission successfully, although he was under no illusions as to how stable the coalition might be. Then Unger came in.

Since he had these immense responsibilities dealing with the Secret War, Unger was somewhat in the position, I would say, of a Chief Executive of a large corporation, perhaps a defense company doing classified work, in that he had a lot of different kinds of American bureaucratic interests to keep his hands on. And he had to try to keep the various Lao factions in order; he had to try to prevent Phoumi Nosavan from doing things that would upset the government. Of course, all the factions had inner problems and foreign sponsors pulling them in various directions.

It was a rather difficult time because you had in Vientiane the three factions each having their own armed troops. You'd see the Pathet Lao troops in the markets in the mornings, walking around town with submachine guns. It probably couldn't have lasted, and didn't last.

These three incompatible factions could not really agree on government leaders. The government was created as a result of internal and international pressures, as well as the U.S. concluding that Phoumi Nosavan and his faction could probably not establish control over all of Laos. It would thus be better to accept a neutral Laos if that could somehow be obtained.

Q: You were a junior officer and obviously didn't have your hands on the levels of power. What was the view of the officers about the CIA operations and relations with the CIA?

MAYHEW: The agency was so important there that, in a way, they took precedence over everything else. In more normal countries you would have a whole host of other interests. The interest in Laos, of course, was really not so much an interest in Laos as an interest in Vietnam and Thailand. Laos merely happened to be a stage on which related events were happening. To the misfortune of the Lao, of course.

So you'd have to say that, really, the whole US interest was bound-up with the security situation. There really were no other interests at all. The agency had a good deal of military success initially with its irregular forces, but these forces could not in the longer run resist the Vietnamese when they became serious about Laos. The Lao, at great cost, fulfilled the function of buffer state, protecting Thailand for a long period from having a communist government on its border.

Q: Was there much of a government to deal with, at your level?

MAYHEW: Not an awful lot. There were a few Lao at the top who were competent, but not very honest. The immense amounts of money that we were introducing brought forth the kind of corruption that you normally have. At one point, I think we were handing them a check for $80 million a month to support the government. This cash-grant policy was an effort to finance the Royal Laotian Army. A great deal of that was raked off by the Laotian figures involved.

In terms of relations, everything, of course, went to the security effort. The rest of us were just sort of there, I think, doing our normal functions. The Lao, certainly on the other side, must have felt much the same way. Everything depended upon the security situation. They were more or less amenable to what we wanted to do, considering that we were funding

them. I think the Lao understood that agents had them by the throat, and that the story was likely to end badly.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Lao there?

MAYHEW: Not very much.

Q: You served for a while as ambassador's aide, how did Unger feel about this hodgepodge of government?

MAYHEW: First of all, I didn't serve as aide too long. I didn't do a terribly good job at that. In any case, Ambassadors don't confide very much in junior officers normally.

I think that he believed very much in what he was doing; worked very hard to make the whole thing go. One of the unforgettable images that people who worked with him had took place during one of the attempted coups. He had to reassure Souvanna Phouma of U.S. support. He went over to Souvanna's house. He was not let in, but Souvanna was up on the balcony and Unger was outside of a fence talking at some 60 feet or so, sort of a Romeo and Juliet balcony scene, holding what in other cases would have been a confidential conversation.

I did go with Unger a couple of times when he talked with General Phoumi. Phoumi had one of the softest and least audible voices I have ever heard, or tried to take notes on. Ambassador Unger spent an awful lot of his time trying to keep Phoumi in line. Phoumi had hard liners on his side who thought they could take care of the situation militarily. It was some time before it was demonstrated that the Royal Lao Army was virtually worthless, and not much could be done with it.

Q: Did the events of the overthrow of Diem and all in October of '63 have any ripple effects?

MAYHEW: I don't recall. I think the two situations were going along in parallel, but not really connected with each other. I left in November of '63, shortly after President Kennedy was shot. In fact, farewell parties that had been arranged for me were canceled because of the assassination. I think it was about a week after the funeral that I left Laos. I've been back to Laos, but only for very brief periods since.

Q: How about the role of the North Vietnamese at that time, how did we perceive it?

MAYHEW: I think we certainly perceived the North Vietnamese as being the counterpart to ourselves in support of their faction, that is the Pathet Lao. But also the Chinese had an important role. That was the time we were much concerned about a Chinese road that was being built from China. It went on for years and years. Partly, it seemed that the construction schedule depended upon the political events because it took so long to be built.

In those days we felt that the Chinese and the Vietnamese definitely had designs on Southeast Asia. This is the time of the “Domino” theory, which, of course, was really the reason that we were in Laos at all. We were fearful that all of Southeast Asia was going to become communist. This was a time when we had more respect, I think, for the possibilities of guerrilla warfare than we do now. Laos certainly was inherently unstable. It's almost born to be a buffer state. The North Vietnamese from their point of view needed it for what became later called the Ho Chi Minh trail. Also, they saw themselves as the natural inheritors of the French in Indochina, if not of all Southeast Asia, certainly Indochina—to recall that era now is to underline the immense differences.

Q: Any love between the Lao and the North Vietnamese?

MAYHEW: Culturally, and in other ways, they're very different. But the Lao don't seem to have animus for the Vietnamese. The Cambodians and the Thais do. Lao, I think, basically

like to be left alone and that's always been very difficult because they're always a tempting target for someone.

Q: You left there in November of '63, where did you go then?

MAYHEW: I was supposed to go to the Sudan, but before I got back to Washington my assignment had been changed. I was going to be on loan to USIS. I eventually ended up in Zaire.

Q: At that time it was called the Congo.

MAYHEW: By the time I got there it was early 1964. I came back here for a few months and did African regional training. I went out there in April of 1964.

Q: Where did you go?

MAYHEW: I was assigned to Stanleyville, now called Kisangani. I went up there by plane from Kinshasa, must have been late April, 1964, but I only stayed in the Congo about 7 months because we were chased out of Stanleyville by the Simba rebels. I was evacuated to Leopoldville and I have never been back. So that was an interesting short period.

Q: Can you describe a bit what was the situation in Stanleyville as you saw it, with the Simbas and all.

MAYHEW: When I got to Stan there was a revolt brewing further east which was led by the Simbas. The revolt against the central government took on east-west overtones though really at base it had more tribal overtones and plain old opportunism than anything else. In fact, it probably was a continuation of the instability and violence that attended independence—the earlier violence which involved Kasavubu, Patrice Lumumba and all of the rest. In fact, I think some of these people in the Eastern Congo called themselves the successors of Lumumba. All the anti-government factions had adopted socialist or

democratic forms of talk, but at base it was mostly tribalism, opportunism and power seeking.

Stanleyville, when I got there, was rather odd because it was in-waiting for something to happen. It had clearly been quite an attractive town in the Belgian days, but the Belgians were long gone and the real estate had begun to run down. Houses hadn't been painted, stucco hadn't been repaired, there was not much to eat in the markets. In fact we sort of lived on maniac leaves, which they called spinach, river fish, and supplies that we sort of scrounged from Belgians with connections. There was not an awful lot to buy. Near my house there was a 5-story Belgian supermarket that had virtually nothing in it except printed cloth that was used for women's clothes, and Blue-Band margarine which was a creation of some Belgian company. There were few westerners in Stan and little to do off the job.

The atmosphere was definitely one of unease, of events unfinished, and there was not an awful lot for a USIS establishment to accomplish. We had a librarian who maintained order in the library extremely rigorously, and would not allow books to circulate because he thought if you lent one it was very likely to be stolen; he was probably right. When we checked the records we found that there were only about a half a dozen books circulating from the library at any one time. The movie program was very good in terms of audience attendance because there's very little else to do in the rural Congo at night. So in those villages that you could get to, there was an enormous crowd. It was not quite clear whether they understood any of the film since film itself was relatively new to them, and many of the sophisticated production techniques, which we take for granted in our films, probably just confused them.

At any rate, it was a very strange place. The Congo is the only place where I've ever had contacts almost continually asking me for favors or money. Clearly, a rather demoralized kind of society, just sort of waiting for something to happen. There was no significant leadership from the government in Leopoldville.

Q: Were there UN troops where you were?

MAYHEW: UN troops were in Stanleyville when I got there. They departed shortly thereafter. I remember there was a UN police colonel, a Nigerian, who said to me that he just did not know what was going to happen to these “fellows” when the UN left because, you see, they're just not British. This, in light of law and order later in Nigeria, is somewhat interesting.

At any rate, Stanleyville when I got there was a very peculiar place. There were very few Europeans there, although there were still some Belgians. There were US missionaries in the area. My boss, Max Kraus, and I were in the USIS post. We had a Greek secretary whose father was a UN-sponsored judge. There were some British-American Tobacco Company people. Not a heck of a lot to do in your off-time. We played tennis nearly every day and played a lot of bridge. For part of the time we had a 4 p.m. daily curfew. Probably would have gone mad if I had been a whole 2 years there. We, of course, had a consulate.

Q: What was the consulate doing?

MAYHEW: Well, they were mainly keeping an eye on the security and the political situation. John Klingerman was the consul for the first part of the time I was there. Then he left and Mike Hoyt came in. Mike was taken prisoner by the Simba rebels and that's a whole long story. At any rate, up until quite near the very end when I was evacuated it was quite peaceful there. No one thought that the Simba rebels were going to get to Stanleyville. After all, they were way over in the eastern Congo, a couple hundred miles away.

But they began moving towards Stanleyville and their chief weapon was the telephone. They would call ahead and say that they were coming and they had big “dawa,” or magic. This usually caused a failure of nerve on the side of the government. I guess because they felt they didn't have as good a witch doctor as the rebels had on their side. So the

Congolese Army would fall back fifty or eighty miles into the jungle to the next little town. There was, however, a major bridge over a very important river whose name I no longer remember.

We thought there was no real possibility of the Simbas getting across that river in numbers if the bridge were blown. Of course, in the event the bridge was not blown, and the Simbas entered. The last day was extremely confused. We didn't know what was happening until about 10 a.m., I heard voices outside and I looked out and all the Congolese were running in one direction or another. We knew just enough to be apprehensive.

We checked with the consulate and found out that the bridge had not been blown, the Congolese forces were falling back on Stanleyville, and they were mostly useless anyway, even at the best of times. So the consulate consulted with Leopoldville by radio, a single-side band, and it was decided in Leo that Max Kraus and I, and some of the people at the consulate should evacuate.

I sent home my servant, who was later killed by the Simbas. I packed a bag and went down to the consulate in one of the rackety old jeeps that USIS had, and by that time you could hear small arms fire. This was the middle of the day. The CIA communicator was out back with the burn barrels and was throwing in material. The consul, Mike Hoyt, had apparently been told to stay or rather not authorized to leave. Leopoldville was somewhat behind the curve, we should have all left. At any rate, all did not.

I went into the consulate and there were 2 American girl tourists there. They'd been told by the consulate that they ought to get out of Stanleyville a week earlier and they'd not done so. The consulate was on a curved street which made kind of a half-moon with the river passing by right in front of it. There was another street which joined the two ends of the half-moon and one end of that street was being held, however briefly, by the Congolese Army. There was a lot of small arms fire going on against the on-coming rebels. I took the

2 girls into the jeep and we went off towards the airport, which fortunately was opposite from the direction of the fight. I floored it; it would go about 30, 35 miles an hour floored.

We came to one end of the half-moon and there was a Congolese army detachment. They were, of course, all armed. They stopped us and asked where we were going. We said the airport. They said, fine, that's where we want to go. About a dozen piled in on top of the girls. They were surprised to see the girls and I guess the girls were a little surprised to have all those guys in the jeep. We went off at whatever speed we could make to the airport. The airport was a confused place with 3 or 4 evacuation planes belonging to the UN, to the Brazzaville Congo attach#, and the Leopoldville attach#. From one C-130 an American military unit had taken up positions around the planes facing outward with virtually a whole battalion of the Congolese army surrounding them. So it was quite an interesting Mexican standoff the Congolese didn't seem interested in testing.

I got out of my car. Max Kraus had driven out by a different USIS jeep. We handed the keys of the jeeps to the Belgian vice consul and said, “Here they are, keep them. We won't hold you responsible if you lose these jeeps but it would be nice to have them back again.” We got on a plane and flew to Leopoldville leaving behind Michael Hoyt, and three or four others who did not get to the airport.

All but one of these eventually locked themselves initially into the consulate vault room, leaving a case of whiskey outside. The consulate was under siege by the Simbas and finally was taken. Those in the vault had to give themselves up. They were in prison for 118 days. There is a Readers Digest published book called 118 Days in Stanleyville which retells some of this, now long since forgotten.

Q: Who were the Simbas?

MAYHEW: They were a ragtag group, which purported to be “socialists,” but they maintained a staff witch doctor. They were led by the same sorts of people who were the leaders on the Congolese government side. That is, people who had been educated by

the missionaries or perhaps half educated, but had ended up on the wrong side of the government either by tribal reasons or friendships or political mischance. I never believed that they had any kind of coherent philosophy

They were supposedly supported by the PRC, which had an embassy in Burundi. And maybe they were, to some extent. If so, it was opportunistic meddling with people who had no real ideology.

Q: Were you getting reports about what the Simbas were doing?

MAYHEW: There was a lot of intelligence reporting about the Simbas. A good deal of it was rather fantastic and not terribly believable. They were settling old scores and eliminating, apparently, a lot of the governmental people. In fact, when they did take over Stanleyville, they executed a great many individuals simply because they had some white blood, including the secretary general of the province. I remember that the burgermeister of Stanleyville was killed, executed in a park in front of the fine apartment that I had.

But a lot of this seemed to be resentment politics and tribalism rather than any coherent political motive. Of course, our people had a rather long and difficult imprisonment with lots of threats to their lives, guns held to their heads, triggers pulled on empty chambers, that sort of thing. Had the rebellion succeeded it's hard to say what political structure might have evolved. I think it would simply be African big-manism. That is, who ever accumulated the most power would run the place. It would be based, to a certain extent, on tribal structures; there would have been very little ideological content as we know it in the western world.

Q: I'm just wondering about, obviously you weren't in there, but this decision to keep people behind.

MAYHEW: Well, I'm not exactly sure why it took place. You'd have to ask the people who made the decision. But I'm not actually so sure it played out that way. I think rather that

they didn't make a decision when they probably should have, or communications were not good enough to tell them in time to leave and therefore they got caught.

I was involved in an operation to rescue these people.

Q: Dragon Rouge—was that it?

MAYHEW: No, Dragon Rouge is the rescue operation much later when Belgian troops went in and did rescue our people and other hostages.

What I mean was sort of an ad hoc operation that seemed to have been thought up largely by Ambassador Godley and various cohorts at the embassy. It took place the next day. It's a very long story, but basically was a rescue effort in which I participated because I was the only person who had ever been in Stanleyville. It was aborted in a place called Lisala because by the time we got to Lisala the consulate people had been moved to a military camp.

Q: We've got time. I mean, what happened? You came back to Leopoldville.

MAYHEW: I came back to Leopoldville on a plane. We arrived, I think, in the early evening.

Q: By the way, I take it that the 2 young girl tourists were gotten out.

MAYHEW: Yes, and they disappeared without ever thanking any of us for our efforts and for a free flight.

I arrived in the late afternoon. I was still on detail to USIS, and John Mowinckel, who was the head of USIS, was out at the airport, as well as other people. He invited me over to dinner and I told him the story of our evacuation. I think John was somewhat taken aback by the Congo, he'd never served anywhere outside of Europe so this was totally new to him. After Laos and Stanleyville I began to think the odd was normal.

At any rate, that evening I went back to a hotel and went to bed and was awakened, at perhaps 1 or 2:00 in the morning, by an officious admin type who said that he had been sent to summon me to an immediate meeting in the embassy with the ambassador. I went to the embassy, and found a meeting going on with Ambassador Godley, DCM Bob Blake, the CIA Station Chief, the Navy Attach#, the head of something called COMISH, a combined military mission, and my boss Max Kraus, as well as others.

What was under discussion was a rescue mission. The prisoners were all still in the Stanleyville consulate at this time. There was a possibility, it was thought, that they could be rescued. The idea was that we would land a helicopter on the consulate lawn and storm the consulate. We would have to take the personnel to be involved in a C-47, along with gas for the helicopter in 55 gallon drums. For our cover we would have 2 T-28s piloted by Cubans left over from the Bay of Pigs. Financed by the Agency, they had been assisting the Congolese Army against the rebels.

Q: T-28s were 2-seater, basically they had been trainers but we used them for ground attacks.

MAYHEW: We used them for ground and air support and for bombing in both Laos and the Congo. The thought here was that the pilots would first “hose down the area,” as the military expression was, around the consulate with 50 caliber machine gun fire before the chopper landed. The mere appearance of the T-28s was supposed to panic the Simbas. We would fly in with the helicopter. We would land on the embassy lawn and rush the consulate, and rescue Mike Hoyt, and the rest. One of the big questions of the operation was: Where was the flag pole on the embassy lawn? Because the embassy lawn was surrounded by a low wall, if the flag pole was in the wrong place, the helicopter might not be able to land. As I recall, we never did establish the exact position of the flag pole, but it was decided to try this “Operation Flagpole” anyway.

So I found myself on the C-47 piloted by the personal American pilot of President Mobutu, a US Air Force officer. Since it's such a long way from Leopoldville to Stanleyville, we had to stop along the way. It was decided that a place called Lisala would be where we would spend the next night. It was now roughly dawn. And away we went. I don't know to this day if Washington approved all this.

At any rate, we got to Lisala in the late afternoon without any prior notice to the locals. We had a safe conduct pass from Mobutu, but it turned out that Lisala, which no one ever told us, was in an area which was hostile to Mobutu. His safe conduct was probably a negative rather than a positive. The Lisala area was controlled by a local warlord, and he seemed to think we were the first wave of an international contingent that was coming to take the Congo back for the Belgians. This was a rumor that had been floating around ever since independence.

We shortly found out that the airstrip we were on was surrounded by local troops whose garb was fatigue pants, bare on the upper torso, but with a monkey's skin over their heads and down their backs. Unfortunately, they were armed. As time went on, they kept getting closer and closer to the airplanes. Remember we had 3 airplanes and a helicopter there. There were various parleys in the town of Lisala with our leadership and their leadership. These were not very productive. The first parley opened with the opposite number pulling his pistol out and holding it on the top of the desk in front of him, and it became obvious after a few moments, that he was drunk. So these parleys were holding actions.

We were there for the night. During the night the monkey-clad troops kept moving closer. We began to wonder how we were going to get out. Concurrently, news came from Leopoldville by radio that the Stanleyville prisoners had been moved to an army camp outside Stanleyville. There was no longer any purpose to our expedition. The question became, so how do we get out?

In the morning it was decided that the Cubans would make a rush for their planes, jump in, take off, and buzz the airport while the other planes got moving.

All of this happened and the Cubans are zooming up and down the field at an altitude of a couple of hundred feet. All the members of our party are armed, and we're all trying to hold our weapons in a nonchalant way as we jump into the C-47. The helicopter had gone off also. The C-47 starts taxiing and the locals started running for the plane.

At that moment, a young CIA type who had been with us all this time, who had been in the parlays, and who had with him a rather out of place briefcase, opened the briefcase. It was stuffed with Congolese francs. He began to throw the francs out of the door of the airplane, causing our monkey-clad pursuers to throw down their weapons and stuff their pockets with the cash. As we went off he was merrily throwing out bundles of cash, the bundles breaking up immediately. Hundred of thousands of Congolese francs were like confetti in the prop wash. We roared down the airstrip and took off.

Q: Oh how wonderful! Such are the aspects of diplomacy.

MAYHEW: That's right, that's money diplomacy.

Q: So you got back and then what happened?

MAYHEW: So we went back to reality in Leo and they had not even a desk for me at USIS there. So I hung around the office, did small tasks and things. USIS really did not have an awful lot of a function there. But the Congo was thought to be important in East-West terms. When, I guess, neither the East nor the West knew the Africans enough to know whether any ideology was going to work. USIS even at one point had the idea that it might open branch posts all over the Congo in the way that they had done in Southeast Asia—in Thailand and Vietnam—which was certainly a mad scheme.

Concurrently, USIS began to build up in Vietnam and USIS went around looking for people, volunteers and otherwise, to go to Vietnam. Since I was at loose ends and it did not look as though the USIS post in Stanleyville was going to be re-opened anytime soon, I was a prime candidate for Vietnam and off I went. I made it around the world from Bangkok to Bangkok in less than a year, considering that I had left Laos in '63, I made it back in '64 on my way to Vietnam.

Q: Did you go back to the Department for a while from Stanleyville?

MAYHEW: No. It was a direct transfer. I was still on loan to USIS having done only 7 months of my 2-year tour. In Vietnam USIS started something called, at that time, the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), later changed to other names.

At any rate, in looking back at the African experience, you can see that we had too many people there trying to do things which were really totally irrelevant to a largely tribal situation. I suppose, in the longer run, you could say that US policy there was more or less successful since the Congo never went, even ostensibly, Marxist. But the actual government that the Congolese had was about on a par with Congo-Brazzaville across the river which was Marxist. Both of them were dictatorships and almost without any redeeming economic benefits for the population.

Q: When you arrived, you got to Saigon again, it's still '64, what was your job?

MAYHEW: I became part of JUSPAO as an advisor to the Vietnamese civilian government's information service and to Vietnamese Army S-5 Psychological War efforts. They had had representatives of this office at Corps level, it was now decided to break that down to division level.

Q: The IV Corps, I Corps.

MAYHEW: One for each Corps. Now there was going to be 8 or 9, I think, and I was going to have the IXth division area.

Q: Which is where?

MAYHEW: Which is down in the Delta, it included 6 provinces in the central delta.

Q: S-5s being the...?

MAYHEW: S-5s being the military psychological warfare branch. Each province had a set of US military province advisors. So we worked with a US military officer advising the Vietnamese S-5s. Each province also had a Vietnamese civilian information officer which we also advised. Our job was to carry on information and psychological warfare.

I had funds with which I could support various activities. We worked with Vietnamese information service and with military S-5s, Vietnamese and American on almost any kind of project that was thought useful. For instance, in Khien Phong province, a good deal of which is watery and practically every village is on a canal, I funded a showboat. It was a boat which was run by the Vietnamese Information Service with a team on it of actors, actresses, singers, and so on which did psychological warfare kinds of entertainment. I think it was probably the only showboat in Vietnam.

It was an idea thought up by one of the American military S-5 advisers who was a dedicated, hardworking, very creative guy. He thought up the idea and got the Vietnamese Information Service to go for it, and I funded a lot of it. We funded posters for poster campaigns, we funded leaflets to be dropped over VC areas, loudspeaker programs, information sheets of all kinds, even some newspaper-like publications. Anything having to do with the media, we could fund if it seemed like a good idea.

We created a Returnee Program, for VC the government was trying to get back. We funded a little booklet with pictures and very little writing—showing how to come back, how

you were reeducated if you'd come back, allowed to go back to your family and all that. At the end of the book it said, come back with this book and you won't have any problems. We had people come in with the book. Whether it warranted its investment, however, is difficult to say.

Q: In the first place, what was the situation—military, politically, and all in the area you were in?

MAYHEW: In the area I was, there were a few districts that were almost totally VC controlled and you really could not go in except to outposts by helicopter. You probably wouldn't choose to spend overnight, if you didn't have to. I think every place that I dealt with, all the district capitals of all of these provinces, you could drop in on by helicopter safely enough. But at night many of these places were just outposts that the government was hanging on to.

On the other hand, An Giang province, which was controlled by the Hoa Hao religious sect, was virtually free of communists. It was almost totally safe. The rest of them varied from Khien Phong, which was bad, to Vien Long and Sa Dec, which were not bad at all, except in the remoter places.

There were a number of roads which were considered unsafe in the daytime and generally untraveled at night. Vinh Binh, which was one of my provinces, which faced the South China Sea, was rather bad from a security point of view. The only real road was the highway that went from Vinh Long, where I lived, to the province capital. It was normally safe in the daytime, but David Engel, who was one of the provincial reporters for the embassy, was using my vehicle and a huge mine was set off in front of it. He and his driver ended up with all the glass from the windshield in their face, but they managed to control the car and go around the hole, which was about 10 feet across and 2-3 feet deep. They could have been killed.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Vietnamese at that time?

MAYHEW: I consider the Vietnamese difficult to deal with in the best of times. As personalities, it seems to me, they are clever and sensitive but xenophobic, back-biting, rather unpleasant people to deal with. I did not have a great deal of difficulty working with them because, after all, I was handing out money, substantial amounts of money. I was helping them do their jobs, but at the same time pushing them to do things I thought advisable and it can't have been easy for them to have me intervening. They tended to have the long Mandarin fingernail, clearly did not move out of their office very much, clearly were accustomed to giving orders and waiting for them. They were not accustomed to what we think of as public relations. One might think they could look good if they and we put some kind of program together that gave them something to tell their bosses they were doing. However, this was too alien to their bureaucratic culture.

Q: What about JUSPAO? Who was running it at that time?

MAYHEW: Barry Zorthian.

Q: I assume you would go up there from time to time.

MAYHEW: Yes, and Zorthian came down to see me from time to time.

Q: What was the spirit of the time?

MAYHEW: USIS was a very big place when it had JUSPAO. The field reps were different from what everybody else was doing. Probably different than most things USIS people have done in the past. We didn't have a lot in common with people in Saigon. But I recall that we thought we were doing important work, that the war was to a large extent psychological. Perhaps everyone in the field thought the war was being managed wrongly.

It seems to me that the Phoenix program had begun when I was there. There was a local CIA guy that we'd see a lot of. But that was out of my purview, and they were not about to tell me anything about it. I had varying relationships with the US military province senior advisors. Some were very shrewd fellows, some were not, some were easy to work with, some weren't so easy. But the ones who weren't so easy sometimes had S-5 advisors who were fairly good. In that case I could just deal with these S-5 advisors.

The S-5 advisors were usually infantry or artillery and trained to fight wars; doing psychological warfare was something of a change for them. But they figured that was their job and they'd go along with the program. One or two were aware of French experience in Indochina and Algeria and were really very interested in the subject and dedicated.

Q: When you left there in '66, what was your feeling about whither Vietnam?

MAYHEW: I think most of us, who were at that time quite junior, felt that this thing could be won, but we weren't doing it the right way. For instance, Mr. McNamara felt that he never got the information that he should have. Well, if he had asked the questions of most people in the field, including his own military, candidly, he would have gotten some candid answers.

There certainly were plenty of people in the field who doubted that we could win the way we were going. In retrospect, whether the South Vietnamese could have won it any way, is hard to say. But trying not to use hindsight, I think certainly many of us felt, I felt anyway, that the war could be won. But you had to do a lot of things differently than they were then doing them. There had to be much more concentration on local development, much better Vietnamese military efforts, much more local autonomy. You had to have people who were dedicated to winning the war.

I'm certain I would have subscribed, for instance, to John Paul Vann's ideas.

Q: You left there in 1966.

MAYHEW: Yes. I spent the last few months in Saigon, working for a general who was deputy to Barry Zorthian for field operations. That was only three months, then I went back to Washington.

Q: Those 3 months that you were in, sort of Zorthian's thing, how did that appear? Was it sort of a never-never land?

MAYHEW: I was never involved with press relations and what we told the press, which seemed to be the controversial area. I think a lot of people were knocking themselves out, trying to do the right thing. But a lot of it was, in retrospect, punching the air. By that time I think the American establishment had become so huge, and so many enterprises of all kinds were going on, that coordination probably was extremely difficult. I'm sure it must have been in USIS, in JUSPAO. They had made a decision to go even further toward increasing the size of JUSPAO. In fact, I think toward the end, they even divided my territory. But eventually, of course, they got one of these JUSPAO kind of advisors under whatever organ it was, CORDS by then perhaps, in every province.

Q: When you came back, did you go back to Washington?

MAYHEW: I came back to Washington, it was '66.

Q: What were you doing then?

MAYHEW: I went to the Ops Center, as a watch officer. I was there through '66. Then the opportunity came up to go to Thai language training, to go to Thailand. So I decided I would like to do that. I was very interested in Southeast Asia, it was a fascinating place, a fascinating time.

Q: You certainly were in two of the hot spots, both being in Stanleyville then being in Vietnam. Just a bit about the Ops Center. What sort of work were you doing in the Ops? Could you explain?

MAYHEW: In many ways it was a little like being back at the Washington Post again, being a copy boy. Because you would be pulling things off of the wire, as it were. The watch officers did all those tasks, which I guess they still do. I don't remember much now about the daily routine. I was generally not involved in writing the summaries. I was a watch officer, worked for some very good senior watch officers. I was only there for a few months. It didn't make any particular impression upon me. I think it was a useful exercise. It's certainly useful for a junior officer as a training exercise to see what the people are interested in on the 7th floor, to be able to read a lot of important cables. You get a better feeling of what is going on and how the Department works.

Q: Thai, how did one get into Thai training?

MAYHEW: I suppose it was like any other hard language. You hear about an opening and show an interest, and I did. I decided I would like to go back to the area, and this seemed to be a good way to do it. So I went into 10 months of Thai training.

Q: It's a very difficult language, isn't it?

MAYHEW: Yes and no. The tones are certainly difficult. It's difficult to speak it really well. On the other hand, grammar is pretty minimal. It has certain advantages in that you don't have to worry about case, number and conjugation of verbs. The verb stays the same, no matter what person. So it has some compensations. But there are no real similarities except for technical words, no cross fertilization with western languages.

Q: How was language study done at that time?

MAYHEW: My experience at FSI is that there are 2 kinds of teachers there. There are the ones who are real pedagogues and keep your nose to the grindstone. This may be partly a reflection of cultures. The Japanese and the Chinese are like that. The Southeast Asians are amongst the very casual ones. It's more difficult to learn because they're much more diffident about what you're doing wrong. They're not as nearly as insistent. If you are lazy, they let you be lazy. While the Chinese, the Japanese, perhaps some others, French, really keep you up to snuff.

At any rate, they were in the throes of changing text books and we outran the text book. Unless you have things really organized, at least for me, you're not going to do as well as you should. I was also getting to the age where it's a little harder to be involved in something that's not problem solving. After all, your whole training involves problem solving and learning languages is not problem solving.

Q: Having gone through this myself a number of times, this feeling of you're going back to your childhood, practically. Where you're just repeating. It's hard to make that adjustment.

MAYHEW: We were a very small class. Jim Montgomery and myself were probably a little old to take a language. We did it well enough, eventually got our 3s. There were lots of things, I think, that could have been done to bring the course to a better order.

Q: You went out to Bangkok, you were there from '68 to '71.

MAYHEW: I was in Thailand from '68 to '72. It was 1971 when I went up to Udorn. The consul in Udorn had gone over to Vietnam to work for John Paul Vann. They needed somebody to fill-in in Udorn for a while. So I went up there. I think I spent about 10 months to a year up in Udorn, my last year.

Q: Let's go back to Bangkok. You went out in '68, what was your job?

MAYHEW: I was an economic officer. It was a fairly large section. In fact, the Bangkok establishment was huge. At that time you had a MAAG which was virtually a corps headquarters without troops. There were 400 to 500 people in AID, and all sorts of other people engaged in counterinsurgency. You even had the Stanford Research Institute out there, and ARPA, and a special assistant for counterinsurgency. It was a huge embassy.

Q: ARPA is?

MAYHEW: It was Advanced Research Projects Agency of DOD.

All of them studying about how better to fight insurgencies. You had an insurgency going on. Within Thailand there was not only consulates in Udorn, Chieng Mai and Songkhla but also USIS branch posts in a number of places, the northeast in particular. Some in the south too. It was really quite a counterinsurgency structure.

Q: As economic officer, what were you dealing with?

MAYHEW: I did minerals and general economic reporting—minerals, energy, rubber. Again it was one of those situations where we probably wouldn't have been quite so interested had not we been so involved in security. It was a period where we were tenants on so many Thai bases. We had such a huge military establishment as well. I didn't mention that, but quite apart from the embassy and MAAG, you had 5 huge airbases and Sattahip and Utapao, one was a port and one was a B-52 base. All for fighting the Vietnam War.

Q: With all these things around, on the economic side we must have been flooding Thailand with American money.

MAYHEW: There certainly was a lot of money coming in. Perhaps the most useful thing we did was for military and counterinsurgency reasons, assisting construction of a good highway from Bangkok up to Korat and then on to Udorn. We assisted the Thai in a huge

rural road building program, mainly in the northeast because that's where the insurgent threat was thought to be more serious. In the north too as well but mainly in the northeast. In 1972 in the northeast you could in all weather get to all the district capitals, not only provincial capitals but district capitals as well. While this was done for security reasons, it turned out to be an amazing economic incentive as well.

Another thing we did in hiring and training labor and building all these bases, we created a large cadre of people who were skilled or semi-skilled. When we left, many of these people went off to the Middle East, and they're still going to the Middle East and all other parts of Asia as construction labor.

The amount of money we put in was certainly considerable for the times. However, the amount of US military spending—not only construction but on everything else, including vegetables bought on the local economy and trucking and all of that—was helpful, but not determinative to later economic development.

There is a book on AID, which came out 3-4 years ago, which concludes that while US aid in all forms was helpful, it was not a major factor in Thai development. Most development came from indigenous factors. But it certainly did jump-start in many ways areas of development outside of Bangkok.

The trouble of course with a military base is that while it spreads money into the local economy, it's not something which is long-lasting. In the Thai case, it certainly wasn't. Most of the cities, I understand, in the northeast have done pretty well since the US presence, with one or two exceptions.

Q: What was the insurgency that everyone was concerned about?

MAYHEW: This was the heyday of insurgencies and the Thai communist party was attempting the same “peoples' war” that had taken place elsewhere. But it was never a threat to Thai national security. The Thai have always had problems along their borders.

In fact, one of the Thai security tenets is to support various minority groups on your border who fight each other and therefore are less likely to become a problem for the Thai. So the Thai were often not as concerned about the insurgency as we were. We were quite concerned because of the “domino theory” prevalent at the time, and also, of course, because we had a commitment to Thai security against communist aggression.

There were certain small areas in the northeast that were very insecure. A few districts were largely under insurgent control. There were some very bad areas in the north, particularly some frontier areas. And some insecure areas in the south, where native insurgency was complicated by remnants of the Malaysia Communist insurgency headquartered in Thailand, and Muslim separatism. But the insurgency never managed to penetrate the Thai heartland in the middle of the country. When I was there there were perhaps 10,000 insurgents, Thai and minorities, out of a population, at that time, perhaps 45 million or so. A few key areas, certainly, they controlled. When I was consul in Udorn in 1972, I never went into Na Kaa district which was near the Phu Pon mountains. The Phu Pon mountains were a redoubt of insurgents; by the time I returned to Thailand in 1983 the king had police in those mountains.

The Thai were fortunate in developing some comprehensive political/military ways of countering the insurgency, and fortunate also in the development of international circumstances. For example, the PRC dropped support of the insurgents. For them the insurgency was never a major national security threat. It eventually more or less withered away. There may be a few separatists and communists still in the south but it's hard to tell whether they're insurgents or whether they're bandits nowadays. But even there, in the 1980s there were mass surrenders arranged by the government. Many of them, of course, being ex-Malaysian communist insurgents.

Q: I take it it was a large economic section at that time, who was running it?

MAYHEW: Konrad Bekker was economic counselor when I got there. It had been Bob Fluker before that, who, by the time I got there, was acting DCM.

Q: How did you all find dealing with the Thai government officials, statistics, and getting information?

MAYHEW: The Thai are generally easy to get along with. It doesn't mean that you get everything from them that you'd like to have. Or that they are always going to do what you want. They certainly aren't. Culturally speaking, they will nearly always be agreeable and easy to get along with. But a tendency to avoid confrontation does not mean they are ready to cede their interests.

It's important in the Thai context to think of the historical situation. When Marshal Sarit took power in about 1957, he seems to have shortly thereafter made a decision for rapid economic development. Basically the Army would run the government, whether or not the government had a civilian or military face. But they would hand over economic development to the private sector and to the people who knew how to do it. They would leave economic planning to the technocrats. It was a strategy of nurturing the golden goose that brought benefits to all concerned.

The Thai did a terrific job, averaging around 8 per cent real growth a year since the 1960s. And they had a very conservative fiscal stance. So you never had the terrible problems that you had in some other countries that built up immense foreign debts. The military did not overspend on weapons. Sometimes they've had a debt-service ratio which was getting to the point where people were beginning to wonder, but it never got to the point where it was a focus of real concern.

They learned to put projects together well for international financing. I think they became, in certain senses, a pet of the international financing banks, because they were able to put a project together, able to carry it out, and carry it out well. The projects were

generally very well selected. There was an enormous amount of private entrepreneurship, the private sector operated extremely well. Wages were low and domestic and foreign investment sufficient. They've done most of the things that have since become so highly praised internationally as the way to go, if you're an undeveloped country, i.e., mainly a strategy of manufacturing for export.

The implied contract between the civilian side, the technocrats, and the military really has carried on very well, to a point where circumstances aren't the same and it doesn't exist in the same form, but in the crucial years, it certainly carried through. The Thai military usually exercised a certain amount of self-restraint in buying weapons, in contracting international debt for weapons purchases. The government, as a whole, obey a kind of golden mean in contracting international debt and in projects. They did very few projects which were solely for prestige, as so many other countries have done. This was just starting of course when I was first there in 1968.

Q: Was corruption a problem?

MAYHEW: Corruption has always been something of a problem, but not a major one in spite of its pervasiveness. The Thai have a system of what one writer called, adapting a western medieval term, prebendalism, meaning that you have to pay people for doing the job that they're supposed to be doing anyway. Corruption, it seems to me, has operated most of the time in Thailand largely as a predictable factor, in which case it comes down to a kind of tax. The Thai usually have a way of arranging things so no one is too unhappy. It's only when the general system gets upset and somebody wants much more than they are normally entitled to, that things have gone badly. I suppose that if development had gone badly, corruption might have become a major issue. But in some ways you can look back and say it's not dissimilar to the 19th century in many cities in the United States, where economic growth was so rapid that it could stand a certain amount of corruption. It has not become, as far as I can tell, a really limiting factor on economic development, as it has in the Philippines or perhaps in some other places.

Q: The time you were there Bangkok was sort of the R&R center. Did that create problems?

MAYHEW: You always had problems, of course, but again, the kind of places that were frequented by American military were not frequented generally by Thai, except by the people making money off of it. The Thai were a pretty tolerant bunch. There were certainly problems which we otherwise would not have had. But they generally could be settled pretty much by the respective militaries.

Q: How about the embassy, Unger was the ambassador when you were there?

MAYHEW: The first time I was there, yes, Unger was the Ambassador. He was still there when I left in 1972.

Q: How did he operate the embassy?

MAYHEW: Being as huge as it was then, it imitated Saigon in structure and got a touch of giganticism. Most people rarely saw the Ambassador. It was imitating Saigon in that it had a mission coordinator, who had a very difficult role vis-a-vis counselors of embassy. His effectiveness depended very much on personality. During my time I had the impression that only one of the three in the slot made anything of it. In general, Unger was faced with an enormous and hard to manage structure. When you have a USAID that has 400 to 500 people and a JUSMAG that has 300 to 400—and all of those military were, of course not really responsible to him. They are, in a sense, but not really because they have their own chain of command up to CINCPAC. It's an enormous management job. There was also a special assistant for counterinsurgency, which you don't have at most embassies, as well as a counselor for politico-military affairs. So you had a huge country team.

In fact, Bangkok always had big country teams. When I went back in 1983, there were 41 sections represented in the country team meetings even then. So back in the late 60s, you necessarily had a lot of meetings and a lot of consultations to try to coordinate it all. The

ambassador was, I think, thought by most of us to be rather remote off there in his corner. We didn't see him too often, but I don't see how it could be otherwise.

Q: Today is the 12th of June 1995. I guess we'll just start when you went to Udorn. You were there from when to when?

MAYHEW: From about October of '71 until August of '72. Tom Barnes, who had been my predecessor in Udorn, had not finished his tour there. He'd gone to work for John Paul Vann in Vietnam, leaving the embassy in sort of a lurch, so I was sent up to finish up his tour.

In fact, I was not particularly interested in going to Udorn since I had enjoyed Bangkok. After one got used to it Udorn was quite an interesting place. We had, at that time, 17 provinces, and an active insurgency. We also had five of the big bases which the US Air Force was using for Vietnam. We had a very large US army supply facility just outside Udorn which was involved in bombs, munitions, etc., used both in Vietnam and Laos. We had branch USIS posts and AID officials.

At the consulate I had two junior officers working for me. Each covered half of the provinces. We were interested in the insurgency which was fairly active in the northeast. We also spent a lot of time brokering relations between the US Air Force at the air bases and the local Thai governors and their establishments. I must say the US military did a very fine job of this, by and large, had consistent liaison with the base commanders, who of course were Thai, and the Thai government establishment.

In some of these small towns, the US Air Force almost overwhelmed the town. Particularly in places that were pretty far out in the woods like Ubon, which was down to the southeast bordering Laos. We also, during my time there, opened a sixth airstrip that had previously existed but was scarcely used. I had never heard of it, had never seen it, but out in the middle of nowhere, in Khon Kaen province, a $19 million airstrip had been built with nothing else around it. It was scrub jungle, with few facilities. It had been used by the CIA

as a training site for irregulars going to Laos, and became the home of a military air wing which, for military reasons, decided to get out of Vietnam. This was, of course, one more thing that we had to deal with local authorities on. They were instructed by Bangkok to be helpful. I remember clearly while this was still top secret, and after I had to be summoned to Bangkok to be told about it, we went out to the site which was off of a road that was not terribly well-traveled. As we got to the turn to go into this airbase, there was a sign at the deserted junction saying that an Indian tailor shop was shortly opening.

We did not in Udorn have anything to do with the CIA's operations in Laos. Since I was consul for Udorn, I focused on northeast Thailand. We did occasionally see these people of course. Meanwhile, there was also a USIS and a CIA structure in the northeast. Many of the capital cities of the various provinces at that time had CIA stations because of our interest in the insurgency and support for counterinsurgency.

Q: You were great supporters of the insurgency?

MAYHEW: No, of Thai counterinsurgency efforts. AID, for example, supported a very large road building program which had been underway for some time. As it turned out, most of my attention was focused on the insurgency and Thai-base relations. Those of us in the field generally felt that, like Vietnam, our Embassy had too optimistic a view of developments in the provinces of concern. We spent much time on the road because distances are long in the northeast. The northeast has about 1/3 of the Thai population, but unfortunately it has very little in the way of natural resources. There's not an awful lot to develop in the northeast. This is still the situation today. The laterite soil doesn't hold water very well, the land is not very good. You could develop, I suppose, manufactures there, but there's no reason to develop them there when you can develop them in Bangkok, near the port, the airfields, and so on.

It remains hard to get Thai to go to the northeast because there's not much in the way of entertainment or schools or social inducements. So it's a poor area and remains the least

developed. I think this is one of the problems which the Thai have—that is, assuring that some of the prosperity of Bangkok somehow trickles down to the northeast, and some of the other poor parts of Thailand as well, but particularly the northeast.

Q: You mentioned the insurgency, what was the insurgency and how was it going and what were we working on?

MAYHEW: The insurgency had various interesting facets to it. It was led largely by Sino Thai. In the north the recruits, the soldiers, were by and large hill people, not ethnic Thai. In the northeast they were mainly Thai. We spent our time talking to province governors, and military men who were engaged in counterinsurgency, trying to keep an eye on what was going on, trying to give Bangkok a straight story of what actually was happening.

As a consequence, of course, there were some provinces where we spent a lot of time and some provinces which I only went once or twice in my entire tour because they were perfectly peaceful. We had no bases there, we had no interests there. You could not possibly try to give equal attention to all 145 districts and subdistricts in these 17 provinces. Therefore I spent most of my time in the provinces that were large from an area, or a demographic point of view, had American bases, and/or had insurgent movements.

The insurgency was interesting from a technical point of view. Contrary to expectations, the insurgency in the northeast had developed in areas which were not the poorest. In fact, Na Gao, which I mentioned earlier, was a relatively well-off area. Apparently, some resources were necessary to sustain an insurgency. Clearly the insurgency had a great deal to do with the fact that the northeastern Thai speak a Lao dialect, are probably nearer to being Lao than being Central Thai, and have felt themselves long overlooked by the central government. They did not feel that they were getting a fair share of development. There was also, obviously, the Vietnamese-Lao communist carry-over from Laos. While

the insurgency was never a threat to the national security, it was certainly a threat to the stability of the north and northeast, and had the potential, I think, of becoming much larger.

In the end the Thai defeated the insurgency for a number of reasons, some internal and some external. The chief external one being that the communist Chinese removed their support, eventually, for the insurgency because they were much more interested in international respectability and in establishing diplomatic relations with Bangkok. They were no longer interested in insurgencies that they had previously supported in southeast Asia. I think, also, the PRC saw they really weren't going anywhere.

Internally the Thai, due I think somewhat to our urging, but more to their own decision, started to combat it in a much more intelligent way. That is, as well as military involvement they began a joint civilian-military approach. In many cases, they in effect bought off the insurgents, allowed them to come back with amnesty, gave them land, etc. These programs had mixed success individually, but as a whole they worked quite well. In the north, the fact that the insurgency involved non-Thai mountain people, and received enormous attention from the royal family, who interested themselves in these peoples' welfare, was a very important factor.

Another important factor was that low-land Thai could never become convinced to join an organization that started in the mountains and was primarily composed of mountain people. So in the long run, the Thai, by dint of great patience and perseverance, gradually suppressed the insurgency.

Q: When you were there, were we seeing this as an irritant more than as a real threat?

MAYHEW: No, I think we took it extremely seriously. We provided a lot of assistance to AID, which had both a development and a counterinsurgency rationale. We had engaged in assisting the Thai in a very large road program in the northeast. By the time I got there, you could drive to nearly every district and subdistrict by all-weather laterite gravel roads, it

was sometimes pretty bumpy but you could get there. AID had worked with a Thai agency to build roads and had done, really, a quite incredible job.

We also, at that time, had a special assistant for counterinsurgency with counselor rank or minister-counselor rank in the embassy. He coordinated with a Thai agency, ISOC, the Internal Suppression Operations Command.

This was a large cross-bureaucratic operation. So the Thai recognized the threat. This was the time that we saw Thailand as the next “domino.” In fact, the fall of one domino, Laos, in 1975 proved to be a caution for the Lao speaking population of the northeast. They saw the refugee flow and learned the experience of their Lao compatriots under communism. It turned out that the Thai insurgents lost some of their appeal.

Q: Did you see any North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao communist forces playing any part in this Thai thing?

MAYHEW: I don't think they ever played a major role. There were intelligence reports from time to time, but I don't think they ever played any part except in transiting supplies and training. After all, with the northeastern Thai and the Lao speaking the same language, it's very easy to get across the Mekong River that is the boundary between Thailand and Laos. But I never heard of any Vietnamese serving with the Thai.

It would be difficult to tell the difference between a Pathet Lao and a northeastern Thai, if you captured one. I think that still, at this time, the Pathet Lao had their hands full in Laos and I don't think they were active in Thai insurgency.

Q: What was your impression of the CIA operation in that area?

MAYHEW: I used to work fairly closely with them. It seemed to me that the branch posts, certainly those that I worked with, were very good and very well plugged in. The CIA was performing liaison with the Thai and providing them various kinds of training and other

assistance. By and large, they were very good. They really knew what was going on in their provinces. They had very good contacts in the Thai hierarchy. And were, I think, of some use to the Thai. The Thai certainly treated them as if they were useful to them. I thought that in the field, agency cooperation was pretty good. But we did always have the feeling that the people in Bangkok did not quite understand the realities of the field. On the other hand, this is always, I think, the feeling that the people in the field have. Some of it, of course, must have been that they certainly did understand what we were telling them, but they weren't able to do anything with the Thai bureaucracy in Bangkok to change what, after all, were Thai realities.

If you're out in the field constantly, you become aware whether your counterparts on the Thai side, are any good or not, judging from hints you hear from the other Thai, what your own experience is, and so on. Some of the Thai military were good and some were not. Some of the civilians were really quite good. Some of the governors had a terrific appreciation of what the insurgency was all about and how to fight it.

The Thai government was not set-up traditionally to deal appropriately with the insurgencies. For instance, if the governor has an agricultural agent in his province, he does not really report to the governor. He reports, in his own chain, to the Ministry of Agriculture in Bangkok. It's Bangkok that determines his next assignment, his promotion, and so on, not the governor. When you have this multiplied by 20 different government agencies—you get all of these people into a meeting, you may get a consensus, but you may not, necessarily, get any action thereafter if you're the governor.

This was very difficult for many of these governors which is, of course, why they created a communist suppression operations command which was civilian and military to cut across these bureaucratic obstacles. Well, it didn't always cut across them. I think, as time went on, you began to get younger military officers who understood much more what so-called revolutionary war was all about, and understood the civic action implications,

and understood how to set-up intelligence organizations, in contrast to some of the older military

Q: How about the American military? Did you have any problems there?

MAYHEW: I should have mentioned them because in addition to the 55,000 Air Force and Army people who were in Thailand, we also had, by analogy with Vietnam, a group of military advisers to the Thai. This had been a very controversial policy question. That is, do you have such advisers, looking at the experience of Vietnam, and if you do, what is to be their role? Do you take part in operations, for instance, as they did in Vietnam? You had the slippery slope argument, and all of that.

The American military advisers that I dealt with were not terribly effective, not because they couldn't have been, but because the Thai didn't really use them. The Thai had their own ways of doing things and were not about to change them. Cooperation seemed to me to be largely on an intelligence basis—what's going on, and here's what we plan to do, and so on. US advice on actually how to organize things, or to train and fight the insurgents probably was not taken very much.

Q: Did you find having these airmen, most of them were without families, didn't that cause consular problems all over the place?

MAYHEW: Not really because they were under military jurisdiction. Otherwise, we would have had hundreds of problems. The Thai and the American MPs patrolled together and, by and large, they handled these things on a military-to-military basis. There were always a few problems that could not be solved that way. There's a famous murder case, of a child in Udorn, which happened before I got there. The fellow who committed the murder was still in a Thai prison when I got there. There was a case near Sattahip of lese majeste.

Q: You were saying there was another case?

MAYHEW: There were several cases. One involved a fellow who had too much to drink and deliberately stepped on the face of the King on a banknote. This was lese majeste, a charge we of course don't have in the US. He ended up in jail for a time. The Thai finally released him to us on the condition that he immediately get out of Thailand and that it not be publicized. Otherwise, he probably would have served on a fairly lengthy tour.

Generally what happened on the difficult cases was that the Thai would imprison an offender for a time and turn them over after publicity on them had died down. After 2 or 3 years they would turn them over to us, for us to get them out of the country.

Two things actually were amazing. One is the amount of Thai cooperation on this. The other one was, and it was constantly brought up by senior officers on the American military side, that we really had a new generation of Americans in the military who were much better behaved than they had been in previous generations. And got into trouble much less. I don't know how many times senior officers told me how much better behaved these men were than they had been in their salad days.

But when you have tens of thousands of people, and you have a certain amount of those with lots of free time, plenty of money and alcohol readily available there's obviously going to have a lot of fights and other minor difficulties, particularly on the weekends. When the Marine Air Wing came to Khon Kaen, and were taken for liberty for the first time to Udorn, which was about 80 miles away, it was really fight night because the Army was also in town. The Army had monopolized all the places of leisure, shall we call it, in Udorn. When the Marines showed up, the first night was very active for the MPs.

But again, most of these problems were minor. The Thai generally did not want to interfere if it's an American against an American, he'd rather leave it to the American MPs. It was only crimes really involving Thai, as the lese majeste case, where they got significantly interested. If you were driving a vehicle and you struck a Thai, you'd have to pay some

kind of compensation. But you probably would not, even for careless or reckless driving, have to do jail time.

You have to remember, of course, that at this time it was not a democratic government which was running Thailand. We did lots of things through the military. The context has to be kept in mind. Not the least of which was that the Thai saw our presence as being in their strategic interest. However, if there had been a democratic government in Thailand, based on party, you'd probably have had much more prickly relationships. Indeed, it'd even be questionable whether you could have brought in 55,000 Americans. That certainly is not to praise military government, but military government for a military purpose certainly is much easier to deal with than a civilian one.

Q: Were there any more issues that you had to deal with? Before we move on?

MAYHEW: I think those are the chief ones that I dealt with. I did not get involved, by and large, with most consular issues. We were a special consular post. We really only existed because of the interest in insurgency, and because of Laos. We did not issue visas. Most of our consular local's time was occupied with the documentation of Thai brides, because there was an extraordinary number of military men who married Thai.

Obviously, a good deal of your time in a place like Udorn is spent on administration. Just keeping yourself going, particularly when we had a political local, an administrative local, a consular local, 2 officers and myself, the drivers. A lot of your time is spent on administration. We had an American wife who was our classified secretary on a part-time basis.

But circumstances later changed greatly. After the Vietnam debacle and at a time when the Thai were disillusioned with the US relationship, my successor once removed was barricaded in his house by students, for a couple of days. The context I spoke of had changed. But the relationship, when I was there, was extremely cordial and very workman-

like. I got to really enjoy being in the northeast and spending a lot of time out of the office in the provinces.

Q: Then you came back to Washington, is that right? You came back in '72.

MAYHEW: I left about August of '72 and arrived back in September of '72. I came back to Washington to work in ACDA. That's the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which I didn't really want to do. The agency, when I got there, was in a certain amount of turmoil after the 1972 election of President Nixon. It was not clear how he would regard the agency.

There was turmoil going in ACDA which took several months to settle down. Meanwhile, I was not given much to do. I was bored stiff with reading old speeches and trying to educate myself on what arms control positions had been—this was, of course, entirely new to me. I was assigned primarily to chemical weapons, which has some interest but it's one of those subjects that seem to go on forever.

The state of real interest in it, I think, was shown by the fact that when I finally went to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, in Geneva for one of its sessions, I spent most of my time taking old speeches, rearranging the paragraphs, putting a new beginning and ending on them, and then we would give them once again. We were basically engaged, as far as I can tell that time, looking back on it, we were basically engaged in an exercise where we wanted to look as though we were interested in chemical weapons control but thought that the verification requirements would be so stringent that we really weren't interested in pursuing it terribly well. We and the Soviets, of course, had a similar interest in many of these arms control issues, and as co-chairmen of the CCD had great influence on its proceedings.

So going to Geneva was interesting from the point of view that it got you out of the office in Washington and Geneva was a nice place to be. But from the work point of view, you were not really going there to do innovative things. You were there to put your brightness and

your innovative thinking into rehashing the same old lines. We were not, of course, going very far at that time with the comprehensive test ban.

Q: We're talking about nuclear test ban.

MAYHEW: So there was a certain amount of ritual to a lot of what we did. We made speeches expressing how we wanted to move forward. But, while the Soviets would make similar speeches, the nonaligned members of the CCD, knowing the game of course, would push their policy and would criticize us for not doing much more on the CTB and for not undertaking our responsibilities under the nonproliferation treaty in regard to the control of nuclear weapons. So there was a certain amount of everyone wanting to keep this thing going for the use it might have in the future, but there was not a lot going on in real substantive terms.

You had to find little niches and little ways to keep the things going that might push arms control forward. This is difficult, and, as is often the case, the most difficult negotiations are in Washington and not in Geneva. I don't recall in my discussions with my counterpart in DOD, more than one or two instances when we agreed on a draft of anything. Their positions were always, from their point of view justified, I suppose, very rigid.

Unfortunately, arms control is one of those kinds of esoteric issues that it's hard to get other people excited about. Particularly, it's hard to get the people at higher levels to focus on them. You can get Henry Kissinger, of course, to focus on nuclear weapons, but anything else, no, not really. At that time conventional weapons control was one of those things that people occasionally talked about, but nobody had the slightest idea that it would ever move forward.

Q: When you're dealing with the Department of Defense, did you catch any concern? I'm a layman in this whole field but I've read that there was some concern, on the part of the military, about some chemical attacks. That the Soviets had equipment which was

designed to deal with chemical attacks. And the chemical attacks would probably come at the onset in any war, and we were not well equipped to deal with that.

MAYHEW: I'm not sure whether the judgment was that chemical attacks would come at the onset of any war, though it may have been. I certainly don't want to minimize the reasons for concern over chemical warfare possibilities, and the reasons why we weren't moving forward. Yes, the Russians apparently had enormous stockpiles of chemical weapons. They seemed much more prepared, both to defend against it and use it, than we were. So the fears, if there were a European war, and the fears of chemical weapons, would certainly have to be very high on the list of things that any American military commander would have to deal with.

I'm not sure whether Soviet military doctrine at the time called for immediate use of chemical weapons, I doubt that it did. But even if it didn't, in arms control you have to deal with what people are capable of doing, as well as evaluating what their intentions might be.

Q: You were with ACDA from '72 until when?

MAYHEW: Late '72 until early '75.

Q: And then what happened?

MAYHEW: Then I went to the Korea desk.

Q: You were on the Korea desk from '75 until when?

MAYHEW: '77. The Korea desk certainly was a relief, to be in some place that was active and much more interesting. I, of course, had no Korea experience. I was the deputy there to Dan O'Donohue, who had a great deal of Korean experience. I dealt with the military and economic issues. It was, I think, a very interesting period.

After Dan left, in the latter part of that period, I served with 2 more country directors, Ed Hurwitz and Bob Rich.

I enjoyed dealing with Koreans and enjoyed being on the desk, but spent most of my time in bureaucratic battles here. I worked with people from other agencies who were really quite amenable most of the time. And, of course, dealing with DOD on Korea is much easier than dealing with DOD on arms control issues.

Q: Were you there during the coming-in of the Carter administration, January of '77?

MAYHEW: I was there until about mid-'77. I think we had either Jay Taylor or Mike Armacost sitting in our office for a long time doing a study, not on whether you should remove US troops, but on how to remove them.

Q: This is, of course, a promise that Jimmy Carter had made.

MAYHEW: He had unfortunately made this promise, it took about 6 months to pull back from it.

Q: It horrified the hell out of those of us who were sitting there.

MAYHEW: It's certainly another instance, like so many presidential candidates who promise to move the Tel Aviv embassy over to Jerusalem, during the campaign. It takes you a while to step back from the mistake of it.

Dick Holbrooke became Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific. I suspect early on he must have begun to doubt the wisdom of troop withdrawal. Maybe he did all the time, for all I know. At any rate, we had somebody sitting in our office doing this very long study. After about 6 months the decision was, fortunately, revoked.

I'm trying to remember whether this was the same time that I went with Phil Habib to Korea, to tell them that they had to return Tong Sun Park, or was that later? Yes, it must have been when I was on the Korea desk.

You will recall that Tong Sun Park was the Korean involved with Congress, allegations of bribery, he was a major figure around Washington.

Q: It was called Korea-gate.

MAYHEW: It was the so-called Korea-gate.

A real wheeler and dealer. He had fled back to Korea. It was decided apparently, that Phil Habib would go out and see General Park Chung Hee to tell him that Tong Sun Park had to be returned to the US, but we would only ask Park about things pertinent to investigations going on here.

We did not want this to become public. So one day I get a call that I'm going to Korea with Phil Habib. I'm told just enough so that I think there's something odd about it, but I don't know what it is. The cover story was that he was going to consult about the forthcoming SCM, the Security Consultative Meeting, that we have annually with the Koreans. By that time Habib was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs and it's obviously a little strange to send him out to consult on this, but that's the story, and it worked to the extent that the real reason for the trip was not discovered.

We get out to Dulles airport and I'm in the line with Habib. After a moment or two he looks around and says, What are you doing in this line? I said, I'm traveling with you in First Class. Obviously, I tell him facetiously the Admin people in EAP were so impressed that I was traveling with you, that they gave me First Class.

Well, he was outraged that I had a First Class ticket, and not Economy. On the plane, he has his own briefing book with him. He's reading his briefing book while carefully shielding

it from me. After a while, the thing becomes obviously impossible and he tells me what we're doing. What could I say but—very well.

We arrive in Tokyo, they have sent an officer out to meet Habib. They don't know what he's up to, either. But they make sure he gets all the connections. Habib is in one of his usual irascible moods, assumed or otherwise.

We get to the airport in Seoul and there must have been 300 reporters there. The Korean press knows something interesting is going on. But it doesn't know what it is. The press, of course, thinks there's something of high strategic significance that he's come to talk to Park Chung Hee about. So we get off the plane and are virtually mobbed. It was like the crowd at a football game. There was no crowd control.

The next morning we have a country team meeting on the SCM. And, of course, Habib has not read the SCM briefing book, a copy of which he had. So it ends up with him puzzling everybody in the country team, except the ambassador and perhaps the DCM, about what he's doing in Korea.

At any rate, he sees Park Chung Hee and then goes off to play golf. I do some consultation on the SCM, and we go back to the airport. We hold an airport press conference in which Habib carefully says nothing for a few minutes. We get back on the airplane, going through the same hundreds of reporters and photographers. Ironically, there is only one other passenger in First Class. His name is Park. He's the brother of Tong Sun Park. He knows Habib, Habib knows him; they have a nice conversation. And away we come.

I went back to Korea two weeks later for the actual SCM. The desk and the embassy having straightened out, in the meantime, any confusions left behind by Habib's extemporaneous comments during the country team meeting.

Q: As I recall, it was sort of worked out where Tong Sun Park answered some queries by Guiliani who is now the mayor of New York.

MAYHEW: I don't remember. You might as the consular type, whether he actually came back or did we do it by interrogatories?

Q: I think we did it by interrogatories. I gave him (Guiliani) the oath. I swore him in. It was a very peculiar thing. I think the assistant attorney general, or something, Guiliani, quizzed him; took some statements from him. Then I'm not quite sure what happened. All I remember is being trotted out to give the oath, and then moved out.

MAYHEW: I think 2 or 3 people were convicted of something having to do with bribery.

Q: There were members of Congress involved.

MAYHEW: Otto Passman, who has since died. I don't remember whether they actually convicted Otto Passman of anything or not. He was a great friend of the Koreans. It involved Korean rice.

Q: Did you have any feel for, basically, Korean corruption within the United States and Congress and all, during this time that you were there?

MAYHEW: You heard an awful lot of things. Probably most of the stories were not true, probably a great many of them were. The most frightening ones were the activities of the KCIA in the United States, which is not quite a corruption issue. Unfortunately, rice exports to Korea had become very important to some US companies, and very profitable, I guess. It seemed to lend itself to congressional intervention and, certainly, to the possibility of corruption. I do think, if I recall correctly, there were a couple of rice companies that were accused of various things. I don't recall the outcome of any investigations, that's just too long ago.

Q: Did the Koreans get after you? Koreans can be very enthusiastic about being hosts and all of this. I was wondering on the desk, did you find Korean hospitality coming at you or not?

MAYHEW: I was still a junior officer, but one thing obvious was, at the beginning when I got on the desk, the Koreans would take me out to lunch and we would go to a very modest restaurant. By the end of my time on the desk, we were going to very fancy restaurants. I always figured that was because no one else wanted to be seen having lunch with the Koreans so they had plenty of representation money. I think, toward the end, they must have been feeling pretty embattled. I think a lot of their old friends did not want to be seen with them, for obvious reasons, by the end of the Park affair.

Q: What was your impression. I mean, sometimes being the new boy on the block, this is not your area of expertise and all of a sudden you're put onto the Korean desk. What were you getting from the other Americans, O'Donohue, Habib or what have you, about the Park Chung Hee regime in Korea, at that period?

MAYHEW: I think that at that period, while it was recognized that: 1 - he was an extremely difficult leader with whom to deal; 2nd - the Korean military were, to say the least, very heavy-handed domestically. We had continual human rights problems with them. Remember, this is not too long after the kidnaping of Kim Dae Jung from Japan to Korea.

However, the importance of Korea in northeast Asia was such that we had to be very careful in how we dealt with the situation. It was one of those very difficult situations in which you have extremely strong security interests which may conflict with an interest in promotion of human rights and democratic evolution. I don't think anybody thought that Park Chung Hee was likely to become at any time a genuine democrat. I think, also, there was the feeling that if you had somebody different from Park it was probably going to be another general who might be a great deal less competent and not much different in terms of human rights.

Q: Which it turned out to be.

MAYHEW: But not having actually served in Korea itself, and known the Koreans closely, I don't consider myself as knowing the situation all that well.

Q: It does point out a certain problem that happens to all of us in the Foreign Service. Service in an area really does give a perspective that just can't be picked up by coming back to Washington, I mean just being assigned to a place in Washington, and to a geographic area.

I know, I was INR officer for the Horn of Africa at one point. I'd never served there. I read everything but it still doesn't give you that feel that you have if you actually worked in a place.

MAYHEW: I think the difference is that when you're actually assigned to a place, you're there 24 hours a day. Every time you go to a party, you're talking to people who are also there, who are interested, your shop talk is very important in a way. We tend to be great shop talkers anyway, because we find our jobs interesting. When you're actually there you are talking to people, and you're hearing so much more, and you're seeing the newspapers, or you're reading translations of newspapers, everyday as part of your daily routine. Being there gives you a great deal more, I believe, than sitting back in Washington and reading the cables and the Intel reports and reading the history books.

I'm not sure that if one said that to a budget-cutter, they would rate a feeling very high. It's very difficult to put a numerical figure on a feeling or understanding for a place. But, I still think the statement is correct.

Q: After the Korea desk you left in '77. Where did you go?

MAYHEW: I went through a period where the bureau wanted to extend me on the Korea desk and I wanted to extend, but that didn't work out. I went to an office which never really

got underway. Interestingly, Paul Cleveland, who had been Political Counselor in Seoul, was going to head it. It was going to be an attempt to use the authorities of the Inspector General's office and put them to use in an evaluation context. We would look at aid, both military and development aid, in various countries and try to evaluate it in the context of the political situation and the policy situation.

Congress did not like the idea of spending money on this. After 2 or 3 months of sitting around looking out a window, it was decided by the powers-that-be not to fight Congress on it.

Q: So we're still in '77.

MAYHEW: '77 and a very early January '78.

The only thing we really did was I took a study by an AID officer who had been with me in Bangkok, and reversed all his conclusions and made a policy recommendation that we should continue aid to Thailand. He later told me that he was told that his study should conclude that aid to Thailand should be ended. So we did not end aid to Thailand.

I needed a job and it was January and there wasn't much going. There was a slot open in Jordan and I was about the only guy who was available. The NEA DAS at the time, Nick Veliotes, was reluctant because the Middle East, like so many of these situations, is supposed to be one of those places where you can't possibly understand it unless you've already been there. Which of course is nonsense.

Q: You went out to Amman, Jordan.

MAYHEW: Yes, February '78.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MAYHEW: Ostensibly, I would have left February 1980, after 2 years, but I extended for a few months so that I would get on the transfer cycle. So, actually it was in the middle of 1980.

When I arrived in Amman it was in February, cold and gloomy, and of course there were few trees. There is little vegetation in Amman. It wasn't what I thought of as my part of the world and was kind of depressing at first. But, it was a very interesting time. Very early on in my tour there, the US started trying to convince King Hussein to join the Camp David peace process. We had visits from Cy Vance who, I think, did his best to convince King Hussein to join. But Hussein, if anything, is a survivor. He has to be very careful what he does and, of course, the Palestinians were against Camp David. At least half of his population was Palestinian. The Syrians were against it. He was going to certainly need some cover.

The one thing, which we might have been able to give him, an end to Israeli West Bank settlements, proved not to be there. President Carter apparently thought he had an agreement to end West Bank settlement. Prime Minister Begin, if he ever made such an agreement, or if he ever thought he had made such an agreement, had changed his mind on it.

So, convincing Hussein to go in on those circumstances was a very difficult task. I think Vance and other visitors who came at that time did their best and made a very good case for it. One of the best cases for Palestinian participation in the Camp David process I ever heard was by former Congressman Solarz, who in my house at a dinner talked to a dozen leading Palestinians and made the case for Camp David as well as I'd ever heard it argued. The Jordanian-Palestinians, being moderates, were certainly receptive to his arguments. But not entirely convinced and, of course, they wouldn't allow themselves to be convinced as long as Yasser Arafat and the PLO as an organization were against it.

I think there were a few who saw it as a good thing to do, at the time. In retrospect it's very unfortunate that they didn't join the Camp David process. Like so many cases with the Middle East and with the Arabs, it was a lost opportunity. But we were not able, at that time, to convince Hussein to join.

That was probably the most important thing that happened during the period that I was there.

Q: Again you were the new boy on the block, what impression were you getting about King Hussein and his role?

MAYHEW: In Jordan he is, and remains, the foundation of the state. He was the one person who had the authority, the public appeal, the personal charisma, the political ability to keep together the Jordanian East-Bankers and the Palestinians, to enjoy the general political support of both groups. I think it is without question that most Jordanians admire the King, realize the necessity of the throne, and are comfortable with the King.

It doesn't mean they always agree with him. In fact, the Palestinians being a very fractious bunch, there's very often disagreements on whatever particular strategy or tactics he's following at the moment. But we're speaking here with moderate Palestinians rather than the radical ones. Most of the radical ones having departed for Lebanon after 1970.

Q: After Black September.

MAYHEW: After Black September, after they almost took over Jordan. The King would not allow them to do so. And they eventually went and took over Lebanon.

So the ones that were left in Jordan were, by and large, very middle-class kind of Palestinians. Most had been educated in the West, many of them in the United States. They were very reasonable people that you could talk to, very forthcoming. In fact, I always thought that with Palestinians, the problem is not getting them to talk enough to

write a reporting cable, the problem is getting them to stop talking and to figure out what is worth reporting. Because they're a very voluble bunch and lovely people. I enjoyed my time there.

But to get back to Hussein. He seems to be the real glue that has kept the country together for this very long time. His brother, Hassan, is probably innately more intelligent a man than Hussein himself is, but without the charm and the charisma. Hussein is marvelous, he can charm a bird out of a tree. He's extremely good with visitors. All of the congressional figures and others that we had out there, who talked to Hussein, would certainly come away with the impression, that this is a reasonable man.

And he is a reasonable man. But he also recognizes the limits. Jordan, after all, is a very small, resource poor country and, I think has never gotten credit from the Arabs for being the only country to give citizenship to Palestinians. It's got Syria on the north and it's got a difficult neighbor to the South. The Saudis have always been very difficult. Jordan needs Saudi assistance, or someone's assistance. Jordan has to put on a very careful balancing act between radical Arabs and the conservative Gulf regimes.

Domestically, Hussein has the problem of Islamic fundamentalism to worry about. He obviously has always in mind the fate of his grandfather, who was assassinated in Jerusalem because he was ready to negotiate with Israel.

He has a difficult family background. His father had mental difficulties. He took over the throne very young and raised himself, in many ways. A man who's proved himself with all kinds of physical feats—jumping out of airplanes, flying helicopters, driving speeding cars, driving motorcycles—all of these very masculine kind of things. He's had a lot of personal tragedies in his life, including a wife who was killed in a helicopter crash. So he's had his share, certainly, of non-political difficulties. To say nothing of the numerous assassination attempts on his life.

At any rate, he's very charming and sophisticated. Discussion is always very reasonable. He speaks in a very modest kind of subdued voice. Good sense of humor, understands how westerners speak and talk. A leader who has proven himself, certainly over a very long time in a situation which has incredible constraints.

Q: What was your impression of how Nick Veliotes as our ambassador, operated?

MAYHEW: Tom Pickering was there when I arrived. Nick later replaced him. There was a great difference of style between Pickering and Veliotes. Pickering is very methodical and very well-organized. Nick kind of managed by the seat of his pants, but certainly everybody liked him, and the embassy ran well. I think he had a real rapport with the King, but Tom Pickering did as well. Entirely different kinds of people, but both very competent under difficult circumstances.

Q: Again, this was an area that was unfamiliar to you. One of the charges of outsiders has been, you have these Arab specialists who have no understanding or sympathy for Israel, hence are almost un-American. I'm talking about the American from within the American Foreign Service. How did you find the view of Israel as you were dealing with them, because everything had an Israeli facet to it, I suppose.

MAYHEW: Particularly in Jordan. If you're in Morocco everything probably doesn't have an Israeli facet to it. But if you're in Jordan there is only one foreign policy issue, the Arab-Israeli problem. You do have economic problems; we were providing assistance. But really there is only one issue. You do nothing but talk about that issue, at all times, at great length. You ventilate completely every facet of it. If you call on a Jordanian, whom you haven't met before, and we did a lot of this, they don't assume that you're going to talk about anything else but the problem.

Like anything else, if you really dive into it, you soon realize the historical complications. History is never really far away in any of your conversations. You go talk to some of the old

Baathists and they start with a recital of historical events as they see them, beginning with the Balfour declaration. It's half an hour before you can get a word in edgewise and they've worked up by that time to 1948, maybe even to the '60s.

To make a judgment whether there is a sort of Arabist misunderstanding, or lack of understanding, seems to me to be extremely difficult. It's very individual, but my impression is that there's little to the charge.

I think there's no doubt that if you spend your time learning Arabic, and talking to Arabs, and you're in Arab countries all the time, that you're going to pick up some of the local flavor. I do not think that you're going to disobey any instructions from Washington, or that you're going to go outside the established policy line. Because the situation is so incredibly complicated, it seems to me that it's very hard to take a different line. You can't go around telling the Arabs, for instance, that they're right and that A, B and C ought to be, because then they might well expect you to deliver on it in some way or other. When you're in conversations in the Middle East, you have to stick to a line. The line you better stick to is the one that is current US policy, because otherwise, your Arab contacts are going to think that while this guy is saying A and B, which doesn't seem to be what I see in the press, is this guy reliable.

So the complexities of being different from the official line, seem to me, to be virtually insuperable. Now it does not mean that if you work with the Arabs for 20 years and speak Arabic that you wouldn't have a certain sympathy for their point of view. I think that's natural. At the same time, you wouldn't be around for 20 years in the Foreign Service, it seems to me, if you did not also realize the imperatives of dealing with Israel. And, of course, many of the people who are Arabists have been in Israel. But the policy imperatives, whether you agree with the policy or not, in the longer run, are certainly there.

Q: Where did you go after?

MAYHEW: I came back to Washington in 1980.

Q: And did what?

MAYHEW: I went to PM.

Q: You went back to Washington and went to Political Military. When you say Political Military, what was the bureau about and what were you doing?

MAYHEW: The bureau has always seemed to me, not having spent much time there, as rather unusual. It's security responsibilities crossed over geographic lines and it had a mandate to interest itself in all of those things having to do with national security. In many ways it was composed of people who were extremely aggressive types, I always thought, had a lot of sharp elbows. Which of course, in many ways, is necessary if you're going to try to overcome the geographic bureaus on any given point. But it just seemed to cultivate that kind of a personality.

At any rate, when I was there I dealt with non-proliferation, which was similar to what I had done in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency several years earlier. At that time non-proliferation effort was headed by Tom Pickering.

Q: Larry Huber and Tom Pickering.

MAYHEW: Tom Pickering was head of the interagency group that dealt with non-proliferation and did a very good job of it, of course. We had regular morning meetings involving ACDA, ourselves, and OES. It was a time, as far as I'm concerned, which was kind of a dull period, particularly since there was not much really going on at that time regarding non-proliferation. I had enough of arms control in my earlier incarnation so I was glad to leave less than 2 years later. There came a chance to go across and work in DOD to work on the Middle East.

Q: When you were in PM, what was Tom Pickering's method of operation, as you saw it.

MAYHEW: Tom, of course, was not in PM, he was in OES. He worked, I think, in rather a collegial kind of way. He made us all feel that we were part of the effort. He was very good at that. On the other hand, there was no doubt, I think, that Tom was running the show. But he did it in such a way that I think that we all were not only accustomed, but looked up to his leadership, to his efforts.

Q: This was sort of the end of the Carter administration, wasn't it?

MAYHEW: This was 1980-81.

Q: So it moved into the Reagan administration.

MAYHEW: Yes, and of course we had a lot of changes when the Reagan administration came in.

Q: Could you talk about some of the atmospherics and the practicalities—a new administration came in, you're talking about non-proliferation. Reagan's administration, particularly in the early years, was rather feisty about defense spending and all of that. Did you feel a change as far as your particular bailiwick was concerned?

MAYHEW: Not so much as far as my particular bailiwick was concerned. There were certainly a lot of changes in the PM bureau. In fact, I had sitting in part of my office at one time, what was informally known as the Gang of Four, the people who had headed the bureau during the Carter time and who had been displaced. All of the top leadership of the bureau was changed.

Q: Non-proliferation, was there much interest in non-proliferation?

MAYHEW: Not really. We always had, I think, an interest in keeping other people from proliferating, but in terms of moving on things like comprehensive test ban, there was

not much sign of that during the Reagan years. The new administration was much more concerned with what it perceived as defense weaknesses than with arms control in general.

Q: What was the attitude of the bureau towards developments in Israel?

MAYHEW: I don't recall a particular attitude.

Q: Because Israel has been presumed, it's never been confirmed but I think it's accepted by everyone, involved on a nuclear weapons program.

MAYHEW: Yes, I think that's correct. On the other hand, it's also correct, in my experience, that no one ever wanted to deal with it. It was one of those things that you tried your best to keep in the closet. Of course there was no demand from anybody to deal with the question of Israeli nuclear capabilities. So no one really wanted to do it, no one really wanted to touch it.

Q: How about India and Pakistan?

MAYHEW: Yes, they had a sort of a life of their own. They go on as they have for all these years, without much expectation that the situation is going to get any better; with a constant fear that it might get worse. Of course, that must have been the period when we became really concerned about Pakistan, during that time, but never really found a way to deal with it. We still haven't found any way to deal with the question.

Q: How about South Africa at that time?

MAYHEW: If I recall correctly, this was the period when we detected a very mysterious explosion between the tip of South Africa and Antarctica, which, as far as I know, has never been adequately explained. Many people thought it was some sort of nuclear test,

perhaps, by the South Africans, and perhaps with Israeli cooperation. As far as I know, it's never been really elucidated.

Q: Did this attract everybody's attention?

MAYHEW: It certainly attracted everybody's attention, yes. I think also that this was a time too when we were becoming more severe in regard to South Africa in other policies. So there was more attention given to the possibilities of South African proliferation. Again, it was one of those very hard cases where leverage was lacking and there was not much one could do with it.

Q: You left PM and went to the Department of Defense.

MAYHEW: Yes.

Q: From when to when?

MAYHEW: It must have been some time in '81 that I went over to Defense because I was not there for a full 2 years. David Ransom, also an FSO, was the director for the Near East in ISA. I became his deputy and then took over the job when he departed.

That was a very interesting period because it saw the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Q: What was the reaction of ISA, from your vantage point, about what was happening in Lebanon? The Israeli invasion of Lebanon caused a great deal of turmoil in the United States because of the developments there.

MAYHEW: I would say that the ISA looked with great skepticism on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Certainly the skeptics were right in the sense that the Israelis certainly had the capability to win battles and to control territory, but they never had the ability to straighten it out, as it were. Probably it was an attack of real hubris on their part, to think that they could go in and make some kind of an arrangement that would last more than

a few minutes. Prime Minister Begin and Ariel Sharon thought they had a surrogate to do their bidding in Bashir Gemayel; that was very shortly revealed as supposition with no credibility.

Basically, it seems to me, that the history of the next couple of years were trying to clear up all the loose ends of the Israeli involvement there. And, of course, the Lebanese problem has gone on almost to the present day, with one variation and another. But I think in retrospect, things would have been a great deal easier to handle, historically, had the Israelis not come into Lebanon.

As you will recall, it was a very difficult period in which we ended up in saving Yasser Arafat and the PLO from the Israelis, as well as the Israelis from themselves, by intervening. Unfortunately, this led to a level of presence and involvement which led to the Marines being blown up by the car bomb. Among the more significant consequences of the time was the radicalization of the Shia and the emergence of the Shia, who had really been rather politically passive in Lebanon earlier on, as a political force that had to be reckoned with. Divisions in the Christian camp, so many of these things that left Lebanon even worse off than it had been, started during that period.

Q: I would have thought that, here is the American military which had to be aware of what was happening, and then eventually became involved, we landed troops there and all. You were dealing, in charge of the sort of political area of the Pentagon, keeping them informed.

MAYHEW: The Defense Department was extremely reluctant to get involved, and had to be pushed. Basically it seemed to me one of those cases where Mr. Weinberger...

Q: The Secretary of Defense...

MAYHEW: ...was overruled by the President, and Mr. Shultz. DOD was always extremely reluctant to get involved. They were right, I think, to be reluctant. If one looks at the

experience that the Israelis had, you can see why one should be reluctant to get involved. Certainly the car bomb which killed so many Marines is a perfect illustration of why they did not want to be there and should not want to be in.

I think it was a case where we were doing our best to save not only the Israelis, but any prospect of dealing with the Arabs on peace for the indefinite future. The disaster that Prime Minister Begin and General Sharon created led oddly enough, having to save the Palestinians, to save Yasser Arafat.

Q: Here you are in ISA, which is sort of the political advisor's place within the Pentagon, in an extremely complex political situation, during this time who would be calling upon you and your office, bureau, what have you. What were you doing?

MAYHEW: We were working extremely hard. I must say a lot of the stuff that we did may have been outdated before we even got it through channels because it was a difficult, a very fast-moving situation basically run and managed by top leadership. My feeling was that the policy was not being made in the Defense Department. Really it was being made by the President, NSC and by the State Department.

Also, my feeling was that my colleagues in the State Department were doing their best to let us in on as little as possible. They would call us as to how we might react to things, which was often, of course, the first time that we had heard such a thing, whatever it was, was contemplated. I had a feeling that it was very much one-way. I think that's a feeling that people in Defense often have about State, having worked there a while, that State would rather not involve them if it doesn't have to, of course that is, I suppose, a natural bureaucratic tendency.

Q: When the decision was first put to put the Marines in, to help get the Palestinians out, to separate the two fighting forces, did the people from the Marines come and say, Tell us about this, or something like that?

MAYHEW: The forces really don't operate that way. They may make reluctance known by inference from what they state as problems, but they pride themselves on doing what they're told, whether they like it or not and they often are not involved in the deliberations very extensively. If they are asked to do something quite quickly, all concerned recognize that it's a last resort.

I don't recall now the details of the decision to put in the Marines. If I recall it correctly, we were forced to go in because Palestinians wouldn't trust the Israelis during evacuation. The Marines were in as a kind of safety guarantee. They stayed on and of course once you stay on you start to be a participant. I don't recall the actual details of why we decided to stay on.

Q: If I recall, we went in to try and help them get out. Help the Palestinians get out. Guarantees were made that nothing would happen to the families of the Palestinians. The Israelis then allowed the Christian militia to go into the camps of Shatila and there was a slaughter. That sort of caused us to go back in with an international force—French and Italian and all. They kind of got bogged down, there wasn't a real mission.

MAYHEW: I don't recall at the moment what they were supposed to be accomplishing.

Q: I'm not sure that there was much. I think it was more in reaction to the massacres that we felt we had to do something. That was the thing.

Were you getting anything from our military about the performance of the Israeli military at that time?

MAYHEW: Not so much that time, but subsequently I think there were a lot of studies done on it—the performance of the weapons that the Syrians and others were using. On the actual fighting by the Israelis, I don't recall much in the way of critiques. They did very well militarily, if you recall. The air battles certainly showed the superiority of American aircraft,

one or two Israeli aircraft were shot down, and 80 or 100 Syrian and other aircraft shot down.

I do not recall specifically any particular critiques.

Q: You left the Department of Defense to go overseas again, is that right?

MAYHEW: My time was coming to an end, my secondment to DOD. I left that job and went to Thailand, for the second time, as political counselor.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MAYHEW: From June '83 until August '88.

Q: What was your job?

MAYHEW: I was political counselor.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

MAYHEW: When I got there it was John Gunther Dean, and later it was Bill Brown. I left a few weeks before Dan O'Donohue took over.

Q: What was the political situation in Thailand during this—that's a good long period, almost 5 years.

MAYHEW: In terms of our relations with Thailand and what was happening on the Thai scene, it was a very interesting period. The '70s had been very chaotic in Thailand. That period had the overthrow of the Thanom/Praphat government in '73, largely by student power. The Thai had then gone through a period of chaotic parliamentary democracy. Probably, it was a time when there was more democracy in Thailand than before or since. On the other hand, it was very disorderly. The student groups who had led the overthrow of Thanom/Praphat found that maintaining their cohesion and maintaining any kind of

political unity was extremely difficult. Funding and supporting democratic political process proved much more difficult than opposing a government that nearly everyone thought had gone on far too long.

There was a right wing reaction to the disorder of the very unstable democratic period, which culminated during demonstrations at one of the universities in 1976, which the Thai military and police put down with extreme severity. There were some very strong grass roots right wing organizations, probably covertly funded by the Ministry of the Interior and others that were active.

Thai society is inherently conservative, and the democratic period ended with the pendulum swinging sharply back to the right, with a military controlled government. General Kriangsak Chomanon, who had been important during the period that I had been there first—in fact he was the fellow that we came over to talk to because he was the man in-charge of dealing with Americans—eventually became Prime Minister.

At any rate, by the time I got there General Prem was Prime Minister. Prem had come in, I think 1980. Prem was a very quiet, almost diffident, public personality. Did not like to talk to the press, rarely said much in public, did not often say a great deal in private either. He kept his counsel very well. He was a man who by intent or not, left people with the thought that he had said something encouraging to them, when, in fact, he had not said very much at all. A useful political trait.

Prem was, I think, in his early days not thought likely to have a long tenure because he was a compromise candidate. Traditionally prime ministers come out of the military, and Prem proved to be a very good military politician and handled the political parties well. He had an 8-year period of rule, a very long time, and one of stability and economic progress. Prem, I think, was personally honest, in contrast to many preceding military Thai leaders. Unfortunately, for political reasons he had to tolerate a certain amount of corruption. But

there was an interesting contrast with the government that came after him which was totally civilian politicians and was seen as extremely corrupt, that of Chatchai Chunawan.

At any rate, during the period that I was there, the relationship with the United States was changing rapidly. Because of the end of the Cold War and the decline of a Vietnamese threat through Cambodia the security became of less immediate significance. At the same time, the Thai economy was developing so rapidly during this period that it affected the complexion of the relationship. We suddenly had a whole host of economic problems with the Thai that we had never had before. When Secretary Shultz visited, on his way to one of the ASEAN foreign ministers meetings, we found ourselves, for the first time, doing talking points for him that had to do with economic matters, where before this had never been necessary. Now we had the problems of intellectual property rights, dumpings, countervailing duties, textile imports, and all of these things.

We tried to tell the Thai that we had these problems with all of our friends, but the Thai tend to look at things in a rather holistic way. We tend to separate things out—deal with economic items on one hand then you send someone in 10 minutes later, a different person, a different place, to ask for support of a UN vote. The Thai don't separate things quite as much. They look at a relationship much more holistically.

One of the important things which affected the atmosphere of the relationship was that these economic matters began to get us a very adverse press. I'd say the coverage changed about late '83, '84. We started to change from being treated in the press as someone who was a great friend and who in international issues was probably right—though they might make some exceptions—to a country that was trying to treat them like a big brother; they didn't need a big brother; this wasn't the colonial period; they weren't a colony and so on. We were “bullying them,” was essentially the feeling. That particular word was used extremely often. Here is the US bullying us again.

From the Thai point of view you could certainly see this. In many cases the economic matters on which we were continually making approaches, were on an absolute basis, not significant in money terms, although they had a certain amount of principle that was important for us. And of course it was a period when we were trying to clear up intellectual property rights questions throughout the Far East.

Textiles were a major concern. The Jenkins Bill, which was a big issue in '84, '85, never passed the Congress. It was a bill which would have returned textile quotas to a level of those several years earlier. Never passed, but for all the harm it did us in Thailand in terms of public relations, in terms of public attitudes, it might as well have been passed.

There is an enormous reservoir of goodwill for the United States in Thailand, not the least of which is because so many Thai have been educated in the United States. But even some of our best friends were getting tired of the economic friction. While they were always polite to us about it, it was clear that they did not like it. It was clear also that when they talked among themselves they thought we were picking on them for reasons which they never quite figured out. They thought we must have an ulterior motive, but they were never quite sure what it was.

At any rate, it was a period of considerable change in the relationship. Domestically, looking back on it, the 8 years that Prem was in power were unfortunately wasted by the Thai political parties and by the Thai political intelligentsia. During that period, Prem stayed in power largely because he had military support and a relatively quiet party situation. It was calm and stable largely because, I think, most Thai developed confidence in Prem. The economy was expanding, and it was clear that he was approved by the throne. Personally, he made no efforts to build up political parties. He was not a member of any political party himself, but did not attempt to hamper their activities.

The parties, which also were relatively stable during the Prem period, really wasted the time. Thai political parties are traditionally based on personalities and are weak on

ideas. They continued so. They did not develop principles or organizations. No credible civilian alternative to Prem ever emerged. The politicians largely devoted themselves to enriching themselves and protecting their own interests. It's unfortunate that while the Thai constitution was geared, in fact, to force the creation of fewer, larger, better funded parties, it only had very mixed success in doing that. There remained a lot of not very significant parties, certainly not based on ideology, nearly all based on personalities, very changeable. If you have an election a lot of people jump parties, going to where they see an advantage. The object of politics is to get into power and stay as long as possible.

So it was a period when the civilians could have done, it seems to me, much more than they did to develop a credible, political class and a credible party system. Because they had this long period of stability under Prem. Because Thai society was modernizing quite rapidly. Because the middle class was growing rapidly, and because the importance of the Thai military as a group was in effect, declining. It should have been a period where there was more political evolution. Looking back now, I think it can be said there was more political consciousness developed, at least in Bangkok, than I thought. It was the Bangkok middle classes that finally forced out the military regime in 1992, albeit after egregious political chicanery by the military.

We, of course, favored change only by democratic means. Whenever we were asked about coups and other political maneuvering, the phrase that we used was that we encouraged the evolution of Thai democracy. This meant that we'd like to see change by elections and democratic means.

The problem of course with political change in Thailand is that change-by-coup had been institutionalized over the long period since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. There had been 17 coups. They were never social revolutions, there was never any significant social change after coups. Coups were generally reflections of changes in political power within the military, or as the Marxists might say, objective conditions. When it became clear that the objective conditions for someone to move on were such

that he ought to move on, there would be a generally bloodless coup. You had a change in leadership but you didn't really have a change in the bureaucracy or society.

By the time that I went to Thailand for a second assignment there were really 3-1/2 important institutions: the bureaucracy, the military, the throne, and you could count Parliament as a half because it had at least gotten to the point where people saw it to their advantage to be parliamentarians. That may have been personal advantage rather than national advantage, but people had begun to think that being a member of a party was worthwhile, that the government situation had evolved enough so that there was considerable freedom of action and influence as a parliamentarian, whether or not one was actually a member of government.

In fact, one of the motive forces of the Thai system is that early on the military seems to have made the decision to allow the technocratic ministries to be run by technocrats. One of the successes of Thai development, is that from an economic viewpoint they have a very conservative leadership, and the military did not go to the budgetary extremes that it has in some other countries. In fact, one of the overall reasons for Thai success is that they don't seem, individually or collectively, to go to extremes. They may have had Marshal Sarit, but they did not have a Marcos. They never had the kind of excesses that the Philippines experienced.

Q: Was there a political change during the time that you were there up to '88?

MAYHEW: It was relatively stable politically with Prem at the top. There were some attempts during the time I was there to push Prem out, particularly a period of about a year, which must have been '85, '86. There were difficulties made for Prem by some figures in the military probably loyal to General Athit. Because General Athit had become commander-in-chief and supreme commander. He looked to normal progression to prime minister. But almost no one wanted to see Athit become Prime Minister except perhaps his immediate followers.

In Thai circumstances, if you don't make the step while you're supreme commander, if you leave that position, it's almost like falling off a cliff. One day you're powerful, the next day you are respected. There were times when it looked like there might be some forced attempt to get rid of Prem. But he was able to weather the storm, partly because the throne made its support for Prem clear. We made it clear that we would not wish to see a change that was not constitutional. In the context this was taken by Athit as supporting Prem.

In the last analysis what we did or said was not a decisive factor. It was the internal balance of forces between Prem and others. The situation was a great deal more complex then and later than I can outline here. But it was quite clear that Prem had more of the Thai military on his side than Athit did. Finally, just after the time that I departed, Prem pretty much ran out of support. The military was a bit restive. General Chavalit was by that time waiting in the wings. Chavalit, who had been a prime supporter of Prem at earlier times, was at that time beginning to maneuver against him. Prem resigned. They called new elections and, I think, most of the public thought that yet again Prem would become prime minister, but when they went to offer him the job, he said, No thanks, and Chatchai became prime minister.

I think that Chatchai, Chavalit, Prem and all of those concerned had at least an implicit, and perhaps an explicit agreement that Chatchai would be an interim prime minister. The problem became that Chatchai liked the job and General Chavalit, who was the putative successor, proved himself not to be the politician that people always thought he was. Chatchai proved very clever in playing by politician's rules, and Chavalit was not. It began to look as though Chatchai would stay on a good bit longer than the year or so that was presumably allotted to him.

Ultimately Chatchai's government ended of course with a military coup. By that time its reputation and political wrangling had left it so low in public regard that there were no mourners at its end. At the time I think the Thai thought, and we thought too, that with the

long period of stability and the extraordinary modernization and economic development which took place during the Prem administration that coups had become outmoded. It's another illustration that economic development can get well ahead of political evolution. And I would add that Thai politics currently seem to substantiate that view.

Q: You were talking about relations with the United States going down mainly because we were beginning to take a more active role.

MAYHEW: Going down is not really the right expression. It was rapidly changing circumstances bringing about changes and adjustments, some of them overdue. The climate of Thai opinion was changing because of other objective developments. Not the least of course was the rapid decline of the Soviet Union, but that is after this period. Also important to Thai attitude was that they had finally suppressed their own communist insurgency. This of course was a subject of interest to us, having a security commitment to Thailand, but it was also psychologically important to the Thai.

And, of course, relations developed with the People's Republic of China during this period. A factor which we haven't mentioned up to this point, was the Cambodian problem. Once it became clear, I think, that the Chinese and the Thai were on the same side of the street against the Vietnamese, that was a significant factor in Thai public psychology. The curbing of Vietnamese ambitions, and the fact that the Chinese were definitely opposed to the Vietnamese, it was almost a de facto alliance of the Chinese and the Thai. Certainly it was a remarkable change in climate and atmosphere, for the Thai it's really a strategic change.

So there were a number of factors that affected relations with the US. The communist insurgency, the change in relations with China, the decline in the likelihood that they would have major security problems from any of their neighbors, as well as the build-up of ASEAN as an important political organization, or an organization with political weight if it chose to use it, all these things caused the relationship with the US to evolve into a

relationship which is a more even relationship, more parity, particularly with their rapid economic development.

A few years ago we were researching some figures for a speech. We found that in 1975, when everybody thought Thailand was the next “domino” which might fall to communism, two-way trade between Thailand and the US was about 750 million dollars. In 1995, this trade is over 15 billion. We have a trade deficit with Thailand. From a period when it was almost inconceivable that you would see something in Bloomingdales saying Made in Thailand, it is now quite common. This took place in one generation.

Q: When you were there, just to get a feel for how an embassy works. You're the political counselor, obviously you don't want things to upset the Thai because you've got your own agenda. The economic counselor has got his or her marching orders which are to challenge the Thai in certain practices which we feel are to our detriment. How did this evolve within the embassy?

MAYHEW: You have to set the stage by saying that the embassy was one of the largest in the world because it's a favorite place for regional headquarters. In fact, in the country team meeting we had 41 sections represented. This is a huge management problem, obviously. In fact you could nearly always count on somebody doing something, amongst these 41 sections, that they should have told management earlier about.

At any rate, I think this is one of the things that was difficult because we still wanted Thai military facilities to be available in case of need. Even though military aid was on the way out. We needed cooperation on narcotics suppression. We had major US investments; and significant interest in Indochina refugee questions.

We had to try to weld all these things into one policy. You could have one policy, but you certainly had several facets because we were at many points carrying on these rather irritating discussions on intellectual property, textiles, and the rest of it. At the same time we really had productive relationships on the security side. Fortunately the Thai military

was not much influenced, at least as far as we could tell, was not much influenced with what was happening on the economic side. In fact during this period we negotiated a couple of useful agreements with the Thai military.

As I mentioned, there was a great reservoir of goodwill towards the United States in Thailand with which one could operate. It's a long-standing relationship. In fact, we had our first commercial treaty with Thailand in 1833. Townsend Harris went to Thailand before he went to Japan.

Of course, it's only since the second World War that it's become as close as it has. I think that now that we seem to have passed most of these economic quarrels, I would expect that the relationship would be extremely friendly, cooperative, productive.

Another fact which lends balance to the relationship is that the Thai and we generally agree on our approach to other international issues. The Thai are usually not willing to take stands on, for example, UN votes on controversial matters which they're not directly involved, but they generally agree with most of our positions internationally. Or at least are prepared not to speak out against our position. They have a free enterprise economy. We have a lot of US investment there. All of these things are the basis for a very friendly relationship.

Q: Going back again to your time, how did you find as political counselor, your operation within the embassy, with the ambassador?

MAYHEW: As I said, it was a difficult management problem because of the enormous number of sections and a large official population but I had access whenever I wanted it to the DCM and the ambassador. I never had any problem seeing them or talking to them. I should add that one half, at least, of what we did in the political section, which we haven't talked about very much, was the Cambodian dimension.

Q: Yes, would you talk about the Cambodia dimension.

MAYHEW: In the political section we had an internal section and an external. At the largest we had 7 officers: myself, 3 on the internal, 3 on the external side as well as 3 secretaries. The external side not only did those things which are common to all political sections, that is Thailand's relationship with ASEAN, with the rest of the world, and so on. It was also reporting on Cambodia, on the efforts of the non-communist groups and the Khmer Rouge, in so far as we could cover them, against the Vietnamese occupation and the government installed by the Vietnamese. We spent a great deal of time on Cambodia.

We also had a kind of watching brief for developments in Vietnam, at that time.

Q: I might, for the record, say that we had no mission in Vietnam or in Cambodia.

MAYHEW: Since the war we had not had any representation in Vietnam. It's difficult to cover one country from another and I always thought that much more could have been done in Washington. Because covering Vietnam at that time, to a large extent, was an INR kind of job. You needed extensive files, because you had to be able to look up what happened to the last party congress, and analyze the differences with this party congress and so on. It was Kremlinology in the old sense and was kind of a research rather than a contact enterprise that the political section normally carry on. But we did do, I think, a fair amount of reasonably good work on Vietnam. We also had no mission in Cambodia.

Q: What was the situation in Cambodia during the time you were dealing with it?

MAYHEW: The Khmer Rouge had been forced out of power in Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese invasion in the last days of 1978 and held on along the Thai border. The KR were supported by the Thai and the Chinese. The Thai and the ASEAN also supported two non-communist groups, which we also supported. There were large Cambodian refugee populations just on the Thai side of the border maintained by the international community through the UN. The Vietnamese installed government, composed of Khmer Rouge, was never able to secure international recognition, nor to secure the countryside.

The non-communist organized themselves into a faction which was headed by Son Sann and Prince Sihanouk. While they were never militarily effective they were very important politically in showing that there was a non-communist resistance to the government in Phnom Penh.

When I got there the KR remained a major thorn in the side of the Vietnamese. All of these groups, including the KR—the KR while certainly being a radical communist group, it's main ideological imperatives seemed to be the same as that of non-communist groups—ethnic hate for the Vietnamese.

At any rate, when I arrived there the longer term prospects did not look terribly good for this resistance movement. On the other hand, it was still in existence. It was beginning to have some minor successes. Much of its successes, of course, were really successes of ASEAN. Because ASEAN, as a group, put together a very impressive anti-Vietnamese Cambodia policy. In the end, it was not successful in driving the Vietnamese out of Cambodia, that resulted from other factors.

But, on the political stage, it was extremely effective. They could maintain a blockade or could get others to agree to maintain a blockade of Cambodia on the economic side. They could mobilize international opinion at the UN and mobilize UN resolutions in a quite effective way.

Meanwhile on the ground, Chinese aid was getting to the KR and some to the non-communists. We were assisting the non-communists not with offensive weapons, but with other kinds of aid. Access to these groups really had to come through Thailand. So, perforce, the political section in Bangkok was doing most of the reporting on Cambodia since we had no presence in Cambodia. The resistance groups were headquartered along the border, and the whole border was under the control of Thai military. You had to have passes, and so on, to get there.

So, therefore, one of the major responsibilities of the political section was reporting on what we knew of what was happening militarily inside Cambodia. As well as maintaining a watching brief on the military situation, and trying to follow the changes of personalities and interests in the non-communist movement. These were very volatile and very unstable groups.

We did our reporting through a couple of officers who spent most of their time with Cambodians and Thai at the border or in Bangkok. We had on the staff an American of Cambodian origin, Sos Kem, who really was on the role of the refugees section, available to us for interpretation.

If there was military action going on in the border, Sos could go out and talk to people and give us some idea of what was going on. Press accounts of military actions were nearly always wrong, very often greatly exaggerated. We really needed to have somebody on the border, and section officers would go there for 3 or 4 days at a time. We would try to do as extensive and as meaningful analyses as we could on the state of the resistance movements, in addition to what we believed was happening inside Cambodia.

At any rate, the situation was relatively quiet along the border when I first arrived in '83. It didn't really change significantly until the Vietnamese attempted to clear their side of the border. Which, if I remember correctly, began in late '84 or late '85. When one of those coincidences that happened, I was out on the border. I didn't generally spend a lot of time on the border. But I was out in the border when one of the battles started. When troops of one of the non-communist leaders were attacked by Cambodians and Vietnamese. It turned out to be the beginning of a rather long offensive by the Vietnamese. At one point, the Vietnamese actually were on the border with Thailand, which is not something the Thai liked at all.

In the end, the attempt to wipe out the Cambodian resistance by the Vietnamese and their Cambodian allies was not successful. I think in retrospect that campaign severely

damaged the KR, however. Because the KR decided to stand and fight on a couple of occasions, especially around Pailin. This was probably a mistake on their part because they did not have the heavy weapons to be able to withstand the Vietnamese. I think, then, they were significantly decreased in strength but I think it was also something that was not realized by most of us until much later.

Q: Some of this, particularly in Cambodia's situation in Laos, internally, how well did you feel you were served and what were your relations with our CIA establishment in Thailand?

MAYHEW: In terms of Cambodia, I thought their reporting was very helpful. In terms of what was going on in Laos, well Laos was pretty low priority. We also tried to maintain a little bit of a watching brief for Laos because our embassy in Laos was so restricted. And so much of the border between Laos and Thailand was not accessible to them. But Laos was not all that much of a priority for us. It only really became a priority when we had a Lao-Thai border war in which, quite unexpectedly, the Lao acquitted themselves well. Of course they also had the principle positions. We did a little bit on that.

Q: You mentioned this Lao-Thai war, battles. What was that about?

MAYHEW: What seems to have happened, as far as I can determine, is that there were Thai with timber concessions on the Thai side who may have had an arrangement with some Lao to cross the border and take some of the timber there too. The deal may have fallen apart. And then, the Lao military may have decided they ought to get rid of the loggers and fracases may have started in forest areas which were not well defined anyway.

Once the fighting started and once diplomats started looking at maps, it became clear that there were 2 different sets of maps, and 2 different interpretations of where the border actually was. The Thai had a case and the Lao had a case. I think an outside observer

would say that the Thai case was probably stronger, but that rarely matters in this kind of a thing.

So the Thai found themselves with a rapidly escalating situation in which they were attacking well-defended Lao position, where the Lao had the advantage of the ground, as it were. The Thai, who always call the Lao “little brothers,” suddenly found themselves getting a very bloody nose.

I went up one time on a tour with diplomats to see the area in question. Once the trees are taken off it's kind of a god-forsaken piece of real estate and not many people would be interested in. But it was very difficult for any of us diplomats, to say—well, yes the border is obviously here, or it's obviously there. At any rate, I think the Thai were very unpleasantly surprised to find out what military capability the Lao had. Eventually it was settled by peaceful negotiation.

Q: Did drugs, narcotics suppression play any role in your operation or was that elsewhere?

MAYHEW: One of the very important facets of the relationship with the Thai is narcotics. Most of the narcotics produced in Burma, which is an extremely large producer of heroin and opium, come through Thailand. I'm not sure it was true then, but now most of the heroin on the streets in the United States comes ultimately from Burmese sources. Burmese production increased substantially, nearly double in the late '80s. A great deal of it is coming across the border. So yes, narcotics suppression is one of the primary topics of discussion with the Thai.

We did have a narcotics suppression section, two State officers, and a large DEA mission. I think it's the largest DEA presence overseas. Relations with the Thai on this question are adequate, but the Thai have never regarded narcotics suppression as the kind of priority item that we have. Working with the Thai on narcotics is one of these rather long processes.

Unfortunately up on the Thai-Burmese border, the Thai have had relationships with various kinds of insurgent groups on the other side of the border for security purposes and for economic purposes, for so long that they've developed a relationship which also leads to corruption in regard to narcotics. There are a great many civilian, police, and military officials in northern Thailand with bad records in this regard.

Dealing with narcotics is very difficult. As you know, we can't control our own borders. Even with the best will in the world, you're still not going to be able, I don't think, to control that border, several hundred miles of jungle.

Q: How did John Gunther Dean operate as an ambassador, from your perspective?

MAYHEW: Mr. Dean is a very interesting personality, probably one of the last of the pro-consular kind of ambassadors. A very formal man in many respects, with, I want to say an authoritarian in approach, that's not quite it, but it will do. A man who certainly has a sense of the theater that's necessary for an ambassador. I think this is important in Thailand. The American ambassador after all in Thailand is a very important figure. The Thai expect a certain type of person. I think from that point of view, Dean filled the bill quite well.

But he's also a fellow, that in many ways, I think a lot of people found difficult to get along with, rather demanding, a little short sometimes with people. Though I did not find him all that difficult.

Q: You left there when?

MAYHEW: I left Thailand in '88.

Q: Then what did you do?

MAYHEW: I was country director for New Zealand and Australia for a year. Dan O'Donohue, who had become ambassador to Thailand and whom I had worked with

before, said that he would like me to take over the Thai desk if I could. So I was only on the Australia/New Zealand desk for a year.

Q: That would be '88 to '89.

MAYHEW: '88 to '89, then I took over the Thai desk. In ANZ it was a quiet period. A visit by Hawke to the US had taken place just before I took over.

Q: Hawke was the Prime Minister?

MAYHEW: Hawke was the Prime Minister of Australia. Relations with New Zealand were as relations with New Zealand have been for a long time, friendly, but on a security level still rather acerbic.

Q: Prickly.

MAYHEW: Prickly, yes. At that time the New Zealanders had not really been forgiven, particularly by the American military, for their anti-nuclear policy. It was one of those cases where the New Zealanders had been such close friends that their subsequent attitudes were really taken as a betrayal by many people. And, of course, you had the situation where people in the USG thought that they had been lied to by Mr. Lange, which is yet another complication. You still had people in the US government then that had been involved in negotiations with Lange.

Q: Lange was Labor?

MAYHEW: Lange was the Labor Prime Minister.

Some people involved thought that Lange was not only a rather nasty piece of work, but a man who did and would lie to them. I don't know the truth of this because I wasn't around for it. It was before my time, but I do know people who felt very strongly. I think probably external circumstances have now made New Zealand's nuclear attitude less important.

Of course the real importance of New Zealand attitudes was the possible influence on attitudes in Australia. The Australians were more concerned about what we might do vis-a-vis New Zealand than anyone else.

Q: Then you went to the Thai/Burma desk from '89 to '92.

MAYHEW: Oddly enough, Burma is one of those places like New Zealand where you can stand on principle. You have so little in the way of countervailing relationships you can stand on principle. In fact, I thought Burma would be a sidelight, but I spent more time on Burma than I thought I would. One might think that you would perhaps spend 10 to 15% of your time on Burma, but, in fact, we spent time on Burma in the last few years simply because of the human rights problem, as well as the narcotics problem.

Q: On those two things, human rights and narcotics, was this mostly, as you say, principle because we had no leverage?

MAYHEW: As a major narcotics supplier virtually untouched at the source, DEA, I think, would like a much better working relationship with the Burmese. But there are many people in the Congress and elsewhere who don't want any kind of relationship with the Burmese on human rights grounds. There is a significant question in any case whether the Burmese would cooperate appropriately on narcotics. This is because of the deals they have made with the narcotics producers and traffickers. Not deals having to do with narcotics themselves, but political deals. That is, the ethnic groups who push the narcotics, who grow and refine and traffic in narcotics, are the people who were involved in the insurgencies against the government. The implicit or explicit deal is that the groups retain a certain amount of autonomy and they can go on doing what they've been doing as long as they don't make war against the government.

It is very difficult to know what to do on the narcotics side with Burma. Even if we had a friendly relationship with a different government we would probably have a very difficult

relationship on narcotics with them. But when you have an administration in Burma that's as bad as it is on the human rights question, and it's difficult to deal with, it's almost impossible to have any kind of normal relationship.

Q: What did we do? Sort of just wring our hands or make protests about human rights and that was it?

MAYHEW: Burma is taking over the conversation although Thailand is a much more important place. We had as good a relationship as probably one could have with Burma during the early '80s. We had assisted a narcotics program. We had given them helicopters and other things, we had a spraying program going on. In retrospect it was probably not as effective as we liked to think it was at the time. Nevertheless, we did have a program with the Burmese.

But once the pro-democratic anti-military government demonstration which began in 1988, were suppressed with such severity by the Burmese military, relations had to change. The whole course of Burmese internal development since, has made it very difficult to deal with the regime. It has resulted in calls for economic boycotts and various other stringent measures against the military government.

The problem, of course, in dealing with the Burmese is we have virtually no leverage. While I was country director we certainly carried on, as assiduously as we could, a policy of trying to isolate the Burmese, make sure that they receive no new international aid, no arms transfers. We spent an awful lot of time ferreting out possible arms transfers to the Burmese and trying to block them from countries which were suspect.

We put together as much of a united front as we could. We had the EEC countries, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Nordics, one or two of the post-communist countries—we got everyone to agree that there should be no new aid, no new arms transfers and that we should pursue human rights in the UN. We eventually got a resolution on the Burmese human rights and there have been subsequent resolutions. We also obtained appointment

of a special Secretary's representative for human rights to the Burmese. It had not all that much effect, but we got some fairly good reports done by this representative about human rights in Burma.

We did, I think, as much as we could along those lines, but the Burmese had been so isolated so long that these diplomatic measures don't give you very much leverage. I think we may have mitigated the regime's performance, but the international community has not been able to obtain some basic things. It is still trying to get elementary things out of the Burmese like International Community of the Red Cross visits to political prisoners.

Meanwhile, the Burmese situation has evolved somewhat in that they have suppressed all the possible political opposition so that they are no longer arresting people. They've had a good many releases of political prisoners. What they have not yet done is release Nobel Prize winning political leader, Aung San Su Kyi. She was imprisoned in 1989 before national elections in 1990. She's a woman of immense determination and moral courage, whose party was an overwhelming victor in 1990 elections.

The upshot is, how do you deal with the Burmese. As I said earlier, Burma is one of those places where you have very little in the way of countervailing relations that would lead you to take a different tact in dealing with them, unlike most other human rights situations in the Far East. Taiwan, Korea, China—in these situations we have had strong countervailing pressures and interests which have forced us to engage. In the Burmese case there are no countervailing interests except for narcotics where progress is uncertain. So it has allowed us to stand on principle, as it were. Thus you have Jim Baker talking about the barbarous butchers of Burma at one of the ASEAN meetings, but you can't show any result for this policy posture.

So my suggestion has been that instead of maintaining the place without an ambassador, as has been the case since the departure of Bert Levin in 1991, that we reconsider and

appoint an ambassador without abandoning or diminishing our policy on human rights. But start to engage the regime.

Q: I've always felt that of all the ridiculous forms of diplomatic procedure, removing an ambassador at a time of tension, it's a way of showing your unhappiness but it doesn't strike me as being a very effective way. It's best to keep your top man there when the situation...

MAYHEW: The Burmese case is a little different. Bert departed at the end of his tour; we did not remove him. We actually nominated a political appointee named Freck Vreeland. He had two problems. One was Senatorial opposition to any ambassador. The other was that during his hearings he offered as his view, when asked about possible economic sanctions, that if the Burmese did not shape up, sanctions might have to be imposed.

That was enough to push the Burmese over the brink and they removed their agr#ment. Then we went through a period of saying, should we teach the Burmese a lesson by not giving them an ambassador.

We finally decided to give them an ambassador, Parker Borg, who was nominated and had his hearing. Meanwhile, people on the Hill who did not wish to see an ambassador go to Burma at all, managed to attach a provision on his approval which—I've forgotten the exact wording of it—but made it much more difficult for us to send him. He eventually studied Burmese for a year, then waited nearly another year, then his appointment died with Congress.

We are at the point now where the argument is made that to send them an ambassador you have to have some significant political signal from the Burmese. In my view, it is of course to make up for our mistake of not having an ambassador by putting a condition on the other party to go forward.

Q: The relations in this '89 to '92 period with Thailand, which as you say was your main, from the Washington perspective...

MAYHEW: I mentioned earlier that Chatchai began to like the idea of being Prime Minister. The military began thinking of how they could get him to move on. He outplayed them politically. They were trying to play his game, but they weren't even in his league. He was so clever a politician that he really had pretty much outsmarted them. He was about to call elections with every prospect of consolidation.

So in the end they decided to remove him by a coup. Which they did and there was virtually no public reaction. If you had been walking around Bangkok that day you would have not known that a coup had taken place. In fact somebody has told me that they had house guests who were out shopping. They came back and were astounded to find that from the time that they had left in the morning to the time they got back in the afternoon, the government had changed by force because there were no exterior signs of it.

One of the reasons for this attitude was that in the year previous to the coup the government and its political components had spent most of their time jockeying for the spoils, and it had been thought to be a very corrupt government. The public's attitude to the coup was either one of approval or of lack of concern. Of course the Thai are used to the change of their government by this means.

Chatchai was put under arrest and we condemned the coup. We were required by law to cut off a whole range of things, cooperation and aid and so on, where there is a non-peaceful transition of government. So that meant we had to suspend military aid, economic aid, I think OPEC insurance, EX-IM loans were affected. There was a whole range of things which were affected.

I think that the Thai in general were a little bit surprised by this, and that most of them were pleased by the attitude that we took. On the other hand, they were chagrined that we

would do things like removing funding for children's health projects which had absolutely nothing to do with the military. That was a little hard I think for them to understand.

Once the military got in they proved to be as incompetent as politicians as they had been before the coup. Their year really was a disaster from the point of view of making a case for the coup. No one believed their public rationale for the coup of protection of the throne and country, and their political management during the time they held power reminded everyone of the problems of military government.

On the other hand, they installed a technocratic government of well respected caliber. In fact it was so good that it was an interesting contrast to previous civilian political governments as well as to the military's hamhandedness during this period. They chose as Prime Minister a man who was so well respected that he had a certain amount of maneuver room. They could not fully control him because they got into the position where they could not afford to remove their own man.

The coup was led by a very large group of officers who were in the military school Class 5. Class 5 was one of the largest classes, and at that time had an unusual number of people in authoritative positions, particularly troop commands.

At any rate, we spent most of that period trying to push the Thai back to some form of democratic government. The period culminated in another political mess created by the military. The military scheduled elections, perhaps a good deal earlier than they wanted because disapproval of the coup became strong, and after a confused period where the military controlled factions attempted to install a civilian figure head, the parties chose Class 5 general Suchinda as Prime Minister. Under other circumstances in earlier times the general might have been satisfactory as a prime minister. But these were different times.

The reaction to the political cynicism of the military's maneuvers was so strong from the Thai public that we had what the press called a cellular telephone evolution—an

enormous number of middle class people coming out and demonstrating against the choice of Suchinda and keeping in contact by fax and cellular phone, a testament to political consciousness that was quiescent a year earlier, as well as to economic and technological development.

It became clear pretty quickly that the situation was deteriorating. It got to a point where the King had to intervene. He can intervene very rarely, but in this particular case after several days of the Army trying to suppress demonstrations and demonstrations building into violence, including one night of violence which there were quite a number of deaths, the King called in 2 generals. One who was a former general, leading the demonstrations, and General Suchinda, and spoke to General Suchinda in a way which made it impossible for Suchinda to do anything else but resign.

The previous technocratic government was recalled and took over for a second time while you had another set of elections. Those elections installed the Chuan government which lasted until a couple of months ago. Chuan was a relatively non-controversial figure who was fairly well respected, a long time politician, but thought to be an honest one.

I think that, on reflection, it's easy for the military to pull a coup from the technical point of view. You just run out the tanks and you take the broadcasting station and that sort of thing. But once you have taken power then your real problems start. While we thought that the failed coup of 1981 was going to be the last one, the Suchinda coup may really be the last one. International attitudes are so much different now, Thailand is so much a part of the global complex, and while the public may not be able to stop a coup, attitudes afterwards make it very difficult to govern.

Q: Different world.

MAYHEW: Different world, much less tolerance for this kind of thing. Including not only by ourselves but by Asians themselves. It's bad for business. I think there is a different kind of military now in Thailand that realizes a good many of these things. They now have an

interest in not making the Thai stock market go down. But there are some things that need to be done.

For Thailand I think that to prevent future coups you need to have credible civilian government for a reasonable length of time, to demonstrate that there is a reasonable alternative to the military. The Chuan government did pretty well with that, but was not in power long enough. Its successor government is unfortunately seen as old style.

Secondly you had to change the attitudes of the Thai military. You can't have people in the military academy thinking that the prime ministership is a natural goal after you become a general. And there has to be some structural changes to get the Thai military out of anti-riot suppression, get them out of maintaining civil order. Some of those have been done. The military's ability to take over security responsibility in Bangkok, for instance, has been changed.

I think that the prospects are relatively good. Mostly because Thai society itself is changing. You have so many more people in the middle class than you did even 10 years ago. The Thai military's importance in society and as a channel of social mobility is declining. There's a great deal more opposition to the military taking over. Thai don't see the military as necessary for stability anymore. I think that is important.

Q: You left the Thai desk and you saw all of these changes coming about. You left the Thai desk in '92.

MAYHEW: In '92. I think in September or October of '92.

Q: And then what?

MAYHEW: For a year, before I actually retired, I did a special project for the Office for the Freely Associated States.

Q: Freely Associated means what?

MAYHEW: Meaning Micronesia and Marshall Islands. Those states which had opted for so-called free association with ourselves as a way of solving the trusteeship question which had been with us since the Second World War.

Palau at that time, which the office also dealt with, was still not yet Associated. It had not accepted the independence option. Free Association is, I suppose you could characterize as a way of becoming independent while still maintaining relationships with us since we still have some responsibilities.

At any rate, no one had ever calculated how much we were spending in and on behalf of these Freely Associated States. Unlike any other place in the world, domestic agencies operate in them because of the previous relationship and the documents of association. No one had ever sat down and calculated the total funding we were providing under the agreements of association. This proved to be quite a job to chase all this down. It took me all my last year in the Department.

It finally came out that these 2 places, one of which has 65,000 people and the other has I think 37,000 or something like that, we were providing about $230 million a year. On a per capita basis, far higher than any place in the world, including Israel.

I spent a year working this out. Everyday I'd go in and I'd turnover a rock somewhere and I'd find a new program. I had to pole the various USG agencies involved to try to chase this down. I eventually created a computer program with all of these different assistance programs in it—what they cost, who was doing them, etc.

The idea behind it was that since the major payments to these states are limited by time—they run out just after 2000—were we doing the right things or the wrong things in terms of development. I must say that the prospects don't look very good.

Q: I agree. I was out in Ponape last year for a little while. Everything is dependent on American money coming in. They have their bread fruit and they have their yams and they have their fish.

MAYHEW: The problem is that the islands have so little in the way of resources and they're living beyond those resources. The only resources they've got are tuna and possibly eco-tourism. The Marshalls for instance are a disgrace, I don't see any reason why there is malnutrition in a country for which we are providing such an enormous amount of assistance, but there is.

Q: I think we might stop at this point. I thank you very much.

MAYHEW: You're welcome.

End of interview